



Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses and Practices in Sweden

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**Work Package 5- New Knowledge on Tolerance and
Cultural Diversity**

**D5.1 Country Synthesis Report on Tolerance and
Cultural diversity - Concepts and Practices**

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Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe**
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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

ACCEPT PLURALISM is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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Executive Summary

In this comprehensive report we draw together the results of three studies of Swedish conceptions of acceptance, tolerance and intolerance.

Chapter 1 addresses the question of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in Sweden and portrays the ways in which the aforementioned types of diversity have been dealt with so far in this Northern European country. In doing so, the report primarily delineates the main constitutive elements of Swedish national identity (i.e. “who is considered to be Swedish”) as well as some of the most important factors and historical conditions that have shaped the modern Swedish state. By explaining the formation of the modern Swedish state as well as the most common features of Swedish national identity, we also provide a basis for an understanding of the demarcations and limitations of Swedish citizenship.

In the introductory part of the paper, we describe some key features of Sweden, migration to Sweden, Swedish official policy on recognition and tolerance, and some of the challenges of cultural diversity that Sweden has faced during recent years. In its second part, the paper focuses on the formation of the Swedish state and the development of a modern (or, rather, late-modern) Swedish national identity, and its constituents. Although the developments during modernity and late modernity are emphasized, some room is left for earlier historical course of events. The Swedish state was formed rather early, in the 11th century, but remained a rather loosely organised formation until the 16th century, when the state was consolidated. During the wars in the 17th century, a highly centralized state was developed, showing a relatively early example of a rigorously organized state power. Since then, centralization has been one of the defining features in the execution of official power, increasingly shaping the relation between the state and the citizens. Later on, this specific tradition of centralization has also shaped the ways in which multicultural policies have been articulated and – above all – executed in Sweden.

In Sweden, the ideological heritage from romantic, idealistic nationalism, which flourished during the 19th century, has – as in most other European countries – shaped the prevalent different conceptions of a national identity. Still, some local particularities may also be noted. From the establishment of the centralized Swedish state and until the 19th century a “nationalism” with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church. Later on, the discourse on national identity was under heavy influence from racist and “scientific” – (in the latter case), predominantly medical – discourses. Thus, during the end of 19th and until the middle of the 20th century a racial and Social Darwinist form of nationalism dominated the public discourse and the state policies.

During the decades following the end of the Second World War, a Swedish national identity was developed, which was articulated in tandem with the ideological underpinnings of the Scandinavian welfare state model – and the relative success this model had shown in comparison to several other European countries. Swedes developed an understanding of themselves as a progressive and a modern group of citizens. According to their political inclination, people emphasized either economic and technological improvement and engineering skills as key features of the Swedish society, and/or the success of the welfare state and the progressive, democratic and humanistic values that accompanied that political project. Following certain demographical changes (above all, an increased immigration), the decline of the Scandinavian model of the welfare state, and the relative success of neoliberal political models, the discursive prerequisites for the articulation of a national identity has changed. It could be said that present-day constituents of the Swedish identity on the one hand are shaped in line with the above-mentioned propensity to regard Swedishness as progressive, modern and democratic, and on the other directly worked out in relation to – and dissociation from – the migrant population and non-European ethnic groups.

In the third section of the paper, which is named “Main cultural challenges”, we outline the above mentioned change of prerequisites for the articulation of a Swedish identity. First, we depict the history of migration to Sweden since the Second World War, and then we provide a short survey of

the minority groups which are living in Sweden. We also provide a short description of some ethnic or religious minority groups, which have encountered an explicit and even extensive opposition to their claims for recognition or tolerance of their group-specific practices. In line with the opposition that their claims have met, it could be argued that they exemplify what is perceived as a cultural challenge.

The modern era of immigration to Sweden can roughly be divided into four stages, each stage representing different types of immigrants and immigration: 1) refugees from neighboring countries, 2) labor immigration from Finland and southern Europe, 3) family reunification and refugees from developing countries, and 4) asylum seekers from southeastern and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, and the free movement of EU citizens within the European Union. With the reception of migrations, Sweden's demographical structure has changed in a manifest way, and over 10 % of the population is born outside Sweden or has parents who are born outside Sweden. Still, with the exception of Finns, most migrant groups have been relatively small in number throughout history.

The diversity of national minorities and the indigenous population the Sámis has been recognized through Sweden's decision to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Still, this special recognition of the national minorities constitutes a break with earlier political traditions. Sweden's official multicultural policy earlier had a more integrated or uniform stance towards national minorities and immigrant communities. Since the middle of the 1970s has Sweden officially adopted multiculturalism as a guiding policy with respect to immigrants and national minorities (even though the official rhetoric of multiculturalism has been downgraded in later years). The needs and the interests the national minorities were more recognized in the light of the political attention directed towards immigrants. The basis for the policy was summarized through the concept "equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation". In the Swedish Instrument of Government it is also emphasized that various groups defined through language, ethnicity and religion should be supported in order to maintain their cultural heritage and identities. Following recently conducted research; we claim that four minority groups in Sweden face particular opposition in their claims for tolerance and/or respect: Saami, Roma, Muslims and Sub-Saharan Africans.

In the fourth section of the report, it is outlined how questions of tolerance, acceptance and recognition has been articulated and formulated in migration- and minority policy during the last decades, with a specific emphasis upon the ten previous years. The multicultural policy that was officially adopted in 1975 was characterized by an endeavor for recognition of minority rights, but it could be defined as an extrapolation of the Swedish welfare model; the goals of equality was enlarged with the goal of "freedom of choice", by assuring the members of ethnic and linguistic minorities a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. Still, the policy was also influenced by a liberal, individualistic political philosophy, with its focus on individuals and individual rights and skepticism towards group-orientated rights, such as collective self-determination, land-rights and cultural autonomy. And - less than a decade after its implementation, an official discourse was articulated which stressed the limits of multiculturalism. The multicultural policy was circumscribed by a perceived need to clarify what was inherently Swedish culture, and a need to clarify which norms and values that are obligatory and unconditional in the Swedish society - and thus- mandatory for migrants to conform to. Thus, we argue that a far-reaching program of tolerance and recognition was never fully implemented in Sweden in spite of the wide spread rhetoric of diversity and multiculturalism.

A distinctive shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy took place in the mid-1990's. The issue of inclusion of migrants into society was by and large transformed to a matter of inclusion of migrants into the labour market, and integrations policy consisted mainly of measures promoting employability - although the legal rights of the minorities were left unchanged. From the vantage point of labour market conditions, the new policy puts its emphasis on the responsibilities and rights of the individual - not his or her affiliations. From now on, the political rhetoric in Sweden's integration and minority politics focused more on "same rights and responsibilities" and "same possibilities". Hence, the ideal of recognition was downgraded and the emphasis was more placed upon notions such as same formal rights and responsibilities and non-discrimination - especially in the labour market.

In summary, it must be noted that a significant gulf between theory and practice haunts the political philosophy of multiculturalism – in Sweden as well as elsewhere. Partly counter to the relativist and pluralist core of the multiculturalism and the diversity oratory, practitioners of the welfare state repeatedly express a plea for conformity to perceived Swedish norms and standards. In official bodies we find an attitude of non-tolerance vis-à-vis those norms and customs of minority groups that are perceived to be not in tune with the basic norms of the majority culture.

The aim of the chapter 2 is to describe and analyze the embodiment of acceptance and recognition in discourses and practices which address cultural diversity in the Swedish educational system. In order to fulfill this general aim, we study how different categories of practitioners in the Swedish school system, such as teachers, headmasters and union representatives, and other stakeholders, such as civil servants, and representatives of political parties and the civil society, discuss and relate to the claims of recognition put forth by Muslim practitioners and/or policy measures designed to reach the fulfillment of those claims. Two cases are studied: the establishment of Muslim independent schools and the claims to dress veiled in public schools, out forth by Muslim youth.

The cases are selected with consideration to a number of circumstances. First, the faith and belief practices of Muslim migrants have been debated on a large scale in Swedish media during the last decade, as in many other West European and North American countries. It is quite common that these practices has been put under scrutiny, and subjected to extensive critique. The attention paid to Muslim belief practices and institutions has also reached Muslim denominational schools and the practice of Burqa and Niqab. Even though the actual cases of controversies in schools have been few concerning the burqa and the niqab, they present challenges to the limits of tolerance that are interesting from the perspective of so-called majority norms in the Swedish society. The establishment of denominational schools during the last two decades, whether Islamic or not, has also received a lot of attention, in mainstream media as well as in debates on education policy. For instance, a number of political parties have voiced demands to keep down the number of Islamic denominational schools.

Second, Muslim migrants has, according to a number of studies, been subjected to direct and indirect discrimination. Whether this discrimination primarily is religious to its nature, or ethnic, and hence targeting their ethnic identity, is not always concluded, but the extensive negative attention mentioned above suggests that the scope of religiously motivated discrimination is either predominant or on the rise. The enactment of Muslim belief practices is not infrequently obstructed. For example, the construction of Mosques does seldom take place in silence; frequent and high-pitched voices of rejection and disapproval are common, and when the buildings once are completed, the congregations receive numerous threats and insults. The opposition is evident, and two mosques have been burned down. Moreover, women wearing burqa or niqab report being harassed in public. Apart from the lack of recognition and acceptance in religious matters, the prevalence of discriminatory mechanisms might also obstruct the access to welfare services and the entry to the labour market.

This report consists of two cases studies, which relies solely on qualitative data. The main part of the empirical material consists of interviews with 13 persons – three teachers, three headmasters, two union representatives, two civil servants, one jurist, one imam and one representative of a political party. The interviews are used as a source for both cases. As additions to interviews, we have collected newspaper articles, memos from public authorities, bills introduced to the parliament, debates on commentary fields in web-edition of newspapers, et cetera. Being a minor study, it is necessary to make some reservations concerning the reliability of our material. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether or not it is possible to make generalizations from our material, thus asserting that the viewpoints found in our material are overlapping with or similar to the attitudes of other teachers, headmasters et cetera.

In sum, a number of disadvantages with the establishment of Islamic denominational schools are expressed. They are allegedly divisive, both culturally and socially, and the quality of their instructions is supposed to be inadequate, in relation to the standards explicated in the national curriculum and syllabi. If the attitudes found in this study is spread all over Sweden, it could reasonable be said that

Muslim schools are met by suspicion. Still, few calls for shutting down of these schools are voiced. It seems that the Muslim denominational schools are tolerated in a literal sense: it is accepted, sometimes pragmatically, but not liked. On the other hand, it could be said that the provision of a juridical and institutional space for religious minorities to establish denominational schools is part of politics of recognition; i.e. an educational policy which, under auspicious circumstances might provide the means for religious minorities to receive respect as equal and gain admission as normal.

It must also be noted that some of the objections to the existence of denominational schools implicitly and explicitly related to some central notions in Swedish educational policy. The notion of equivalence is a keyword in this context, and signifies on the one hand a demand for abidance by the national curriculum and syllabi, and on the other its priority over freedom of choice, and also the priority of “demos” over “ethnos”. Regarding the latter, the equalizing and integrative objectives of the compulsory school project seem to be alive and kicking, but the quest for recognition of minority beliefs systems is circumscribed.

A number of objections to the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab are put forth by our interviewees. In contrast to the media debate, the argument of gender equality was relatively downgraded. Rather, the interviewees focused on assumed problems with identification and communication. It was said that the abovementioned veiling practices obstructed the possibility of identifying the students at school, and also rendered the communication – and hence the instructions – at school more difficult. In comparison with the question of Islamic denominational schools, the non-tolerant stance was more manifest, although few explicit calls for a prohibition were made. Moreover, a specific discursive framing of the veiling practices could be discerned. The wearing of Burqa or Niqab was associated with phenomena such as mischief and the hidden, thus casting suspicion over the practice in question.

As an instance of the everyday life, rather than an institutional arrangement, veiling practices could arguably be considered to be of less concern for educational policy than the establishment and maintenance of Islamic denominational schools. Still, the question of prohibition has gained a lot media attention during the last years, and brought the regulating dimension to the fore. And though our material contains few explicit calls for prohibition, several interviewees claimed that a teacher must see the face of the student in order to instruct and educate. And although the goal of equivalence was less relevant in this matter, the practice of veiling was questioned with reference to universal human rights, as the rights of the child. The right of the parent to exert influence in religious matter was questioned, since it could be regarded as a limitation of the freedom to choose direction to the walk of life. Thus, it seems like that the right to wear Burqa and Niqab in public schools are among the non-tolerable, although few explicit calls for prohibition can be discerned. So far, the material in our report, consisting of relatively limited set of qualitative data resonates with the broader tendency discerned by Orlando Mella, Irving Palm and Kristin Bromark (2011): the resistance in Sweden against the Burqa and the Niqab is compact; almost nine Swedes out of ten find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab, respectively, at school or at work (Mella *et al* 2011:30), whereas seven out of ten find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab at other public places.

As noted above, the stress on equivalence consists of two distinct although related arguments. On the one hand, there is a demand for abidance by the law (here: steering documents such as national curriculum and syllabi), which among other things are paid attention to because Islamic schools are suspected not to follow these steering documents accordingly. This interpretation of “equivalence” is related to an understanding of the term which has become more and more frequent since the introduction of freedom of choice and independent schools in Swedish educational policy, and the decentralized system of governance of education in Sweden (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2002). In this context, where regulation is obtained through management by objective and evaluation, and responsibilities are spread between numerous responsible organizations, the goal of equivalence is equivalent (!) to abiding by the law.

On the other hand, there is wish to maintain socially integrated educational environments, in which students from different ethnicities, classes and gender meets and interacts. Thus, it seems like the equalizing and integrative objectives which were central to the compulsory school project implemented during the heyday of the Scandinavian welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990) seem to be “alive and kicking”. But the quest for recognition of minority beliefs systems, central to the policy of multiculturalism, is circumscribed. In so far, the arguments employed here gives priority to the reproduction of “demos” over the reproduction of “ethnos”. It must also be noted that the freedom of choice, an important feature in the neoliberal turn of educational policy, does not seems to be so important for the interviewees in this particular matter.

If we focus on the most elaborated objections in the report, we find arguments which 1) was presented as a response to the presumably universalist claims of freedom of religion, thus setting the professional considerations which are presented above in a more general, ethical context, and 2) focused on an ethical value of overriding importance, viz. the rights of the child. Emphasis is laid on the right of the child to “choose his own path”, a wording which is used by several interviewees, which most of all seems to refer to the first paragraph in article 14 in the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child, which aims at protecting “the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. In the arguments of the teachers, the headmasters and the union representatives, this ethical principle makes it to possible to assert that children to a certain extent has the freedom from the religion (as well as from other loyalties, or sets of ideas and beliefs) of the parents. Although not explicitly questioning the parents rights’ to raise and guide their own children, they distinctly emphasize the autonomy of the child, and it’s potential to choose something else than that which is given within the family.

Chapter 3 deals with specific political challenge that the indigenous population the Sámi people present with reference to the Swedish state and “the majority society”. When the new Instrument of Government was adopted by the Swedish Parliament in 2010, the special status of the Swedish Sámi people was recognised constitutionally for the first time. Already in 1993, however, the popularly elected Swedish Sámi Parliament (Sametinget) was established in order to grant the Sámi people cultural autonomy, and today the parliament is considered to be the main body to ensure Sámi self-determination. In many ways, the situation and status of the Sámi people can be said to be highly acknowledged and recognized in Sweden, where the political representation of the Sámi is institutionalised in and through the Sámi Parliament. This recognition of the Sámi people appears, however, to be challenged or undermined by different forms of discrimination and intolerance. There have, for instance, been several conflicts during the last few years on the right to use land and water for the maintenance of Sámi reindeer on private property, and there have been severe conflicts on the construction of wind power parks in traditional reindeer grazing areas. In its observations concerning how Sweden fulfils the conventions concerning the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the UN is regularly voicing concerns over these kind of issues, for instance, regarding the fact that the issue of ownership of land and water still has not been investigated, and over the Swedish Government’s passivity in regards to clarifying the borders for the reindeer grazing area. Moreover, according to a report from the Swedish Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Sámi testifies to harassment in their day-to-day lives connected to their ethnic background. In spite of the demonstration of acceptance on a national and constitutional level, an intolerant and stereotypical understanding of the Sámi people thus seem to prevail.

In this case study we investigate this potential coexistence of recognition and intolerance in the Swedish society. Our focus is on the Swedish Sámi Parliament, as it represents the most radical institutionalized form of recognition of the Sámi people (and of any national minority in Sweden). The status of the parliament is as an administrative authority under the Swedish Government. However, it is a popularly elected administrative authority and the parliament is assigned two different functions: as an administrative authority whose tasks are strictly regulated by law and as a popularly elected parliament representing the Sámi people. With the status as an administrative authority, the parliament is not granted any actual political power, such as a right of participation in decision-making, veto-rights concerning administrative decisions or independent sources of income (like taxation rights). In 2010 the Sámi Parliament was allocated a total amount of 185 146 000 SEK (around 19 405 000

EUR), where all grants were directed towards its role as an administrative authority.

By looking at the media coverage of the Swedish Sámi Parliament since its inauguration in 1993, we analyse how the parliament is conceptualised within the media discourse. We analysed the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament in eight national and local daily newspapers during the years 2005, 2009-2011, there are no local or regional newspapers in Sámi in Sweden. We also analysed articles from the election years 1993, 1997, and 2001 (two elections) ten days before and ten days after the elections, and we started out by an analysis of the headlines of all the articles published in three non-election years (1994, 2000, and 2011). A total number of 1251 articles were analysed. Is the Sámi right to self-determination widely accepted in the Swedish society as portrayed by the media? Or is this institutional accommodation of the Sámi people challenged by a widespread intolerance? If so, what might the consequences of this intolerance be for the political representation of the Sámi?

Our headline analysis clearly showed that the media discourse on the Sámi Parliament is characterized by a very limited set of topics out of which the political instability and the administrative performance of the parliament were most prominent. This is not too surprising as these topics obviously spring out of the dual role of the parliament as both representative body of the Sámi people and as an administrative authority under the Swedish government. More interesting, however, is that these topics tend to be conceptualised as major problems and represented in a negatively biased way, as is often the case in news reporting on ethnic minorities. Headlines that refer to what can be considered as the normal activity of the parliament, like “the Sámi Parliament adopted the budget proposal”, are rather uncommon; instead, most of the examined headlines tend to focus on negative attributes such as, “‘pure Balkan war in the Sámi Parliament’—a negotiator sort out the chaos”.

When we turned our attention to the more comprehensive analysis of the Swedish press and its coverage of the Sámi Parliament, our focus was on how the problem of the parliament’s political instability and weak administrative performance was explained in and by the media. What kind of problem was the parliament represented to be? What news representations were produced and reproduced within the media discourse? What was taken for granted and thus not critically examined?

The political instability of the parliament was basically explained in two different ways within discourse. In the first, the problem is considered to be external to the Sámi Parliament, as it is the institutional design of the parliament that hampers its political stability and constrains the political parties and the MPs. In the second way to explain the political instability, the problem is considered to be internal to the parliament. In this view the problem is typically represented to be a result of a persistent and unsolvable conflict between the political parties, a firm unwillingness to compromise or a personal antagonism between the MPs. The first way to explain the political instability of the Sámi Parliament is, however, marginal within the media discourse. It is the internal explanation that dominates, and it is important to point out that the order of discourse remains more or less unchanged during the period of our study. Our ambition is not to discuss or evaluate the accuracy of the different ways of explaining the problem. However, the implications of the different explanations are extremely severe. If the problem is external, the blame for the defects of the parliament is basically to be put on the Swedish state; it is primarily the design of the parliament that ought to be in focus of the discussion and, in a wider perspective, Swedish Sámi policy at large. But if the problem is considered to be internal—a conception of the parliament that dominates the media discourse—the blame is to be put on the Sámi themselves. In this perspective, the discussions tend to focus on the political parties and the individual MPs as elected representatives rather than the institutional prerequisites for their actual work.

As in the case of the depiction of the political instability of the Sámi Parliament, the explanation of the weak administrative performance of the Sámi Parliament, we discerned two general explanations regarding the causes of this problem. Within the terms of the dominant discourse, the weak performance was assumed to result from individual incompetence of the MPs or the functionaries, immature behaviour or a not fully developed organisation and a further explanation could be strong and deeply engrained internal divisions between the subgroups of the Sámi population. The weak performance is thus explained by internal flaws. The alternative explanation to this problem is once

again explained in terms of the institutional design of the parliament, i.e. external factors. The conclusion is thus similar to the analysis of the other problematic topic within the media discourse: if the problem is formulated as an internal problem, the Sámi officials are the ones to blame for the defects of the parliament.

If we return to our research questions it appears as if the recognition of the Sámi as an indigenous people is widely accepted in the news representations of the Sámi Parliament. The parliament in itself and the Sámi right to self-determination are not explicitly challenged. In the media discourse, however, a consensus can be found on the limited capacity of the Sámi Parliament to function as a representative body of the Sámi people and on its weak administrative performance, which—if true—must be considered to be serious problems. On the one hand, the massive critique formulated in the media discourse could be seen as legitimate and a fulfilment of one of the major tasks of the media: to critically scrutinise political and administrative power. From this point of view a malfunctioning Sámi Parliament ought rightfully to be criticised, just like any other publicly elected body in Sweden (or elsewhere), and the elected MPs have to take their responsibility. Furthermore, the media discourse might be interpreted as mainly, or at least partly, reflecting an internal Sámi debate, not the attitudes of the dominant Swedish society, as the articles often refer to or quote Sámi MPs and civil servants. However, the internal Sámi debate is much more complex than what is usually represented in the media. Earlier research also confirms that the Sámi MPs are worried about how the parliament works in both its roles, but a fundamental problem according to them is the unsolved question of how the Sámi right to self-determination ought to be interpreted and what it would mean in the day-to-day life of the Sámi Parliament. This perspective is completely absent in the media discourse.

On the other hand, this one-sided news representation is problematic, and has consequences for the political representation of the Sámi, especially in a context where the right to self-determination—what it means and ought to mean—is negotiated and re-negotiated in political practice. The media discourse has both direct and indirect consequences for the political representation of the Sámi, delimiting their recognised right to self-determination. Directly, it affects the construction of a Sámi public sphere, indispensable for the parliament to function in its role as a representative body. The news reporting is limited in scope as it privileges reporting on internal conflicts and individual behaviour, and tend to neglect or ignore fundamental political problems of the Sámi people, thus it contributes to a de-politicisation of Sámi politics. Furthermore, it contributes to a conception of the parliament as problematic and dysfunctional, thereby undermining the potential level of trust of its constituency. Indirectly, the emphasis on the democratic and administrative immaturity of the Sámi parliament reproduces stereotypical images of the Sámi as unable to handle their own affairs, thus framing the problem in a specific way. And if we believe that the way a problem is framed affect the way that this issue is dealt with politically, then the range of possible political options is seriously limited by the way the Sámi Parliament is conceptualised in media discourse. If it is the Sámi Parliament (and the Sámi politicians) in itself that is the problem, and not the Swedish Sámi policy or the relation between the dominant majority society and the Sámi minority, political proposals trying to increase Sámi self-determination will easily be rejected within discourse.

Our analysis indicates that the recognition of the Sámi people on an institutional level—the right to self-determination as institutionalised in and through the Sámi Parliament—is hampered by the way the media represents the Sámi Parliament. The practice of toleration in the media discourse seems to reach a limit when the Sámi claims equal public and political status in capacity of being an indigenous people. By neglecting the relation between the Sámi people and the dominant Swedish society in news representations, i.e. the right to self-determination, it is obvious that the Swedish State still is considered to be the sole legitimate authority with exclusive “discretion over the values that justify and limit toleration”. The practice of toleration as it is expressed in the media is thus based on domination and disrespect, not on recognition and respect. In that way, the media discourse could be characterised in terms of a limited or very limited tolerance.

In chapter four, finally we present the common themes in the reports and how they reflect salient political and cultural traditions in the Swedish society. A short presentation of the main research results is also presented.

Key words

National identity, assimilation, Protestantism, centralised state, Corporatism, welfare state, pluralism, acceptance, toleration, recognition, Islamic denominational schools, Burqa, Niqab, veiling, educational policy, indigenous rights, political representation, Swedish Sámi Parliament, discourse analysis, news representation, media

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: TOLERATION IN SWEDEN

Sweden had during the most part of the 20th century been characterized by an assimilation policy with regard to minority-majority relations. The immigrants and several other cultural minorities were expected to leave their old cultures behind and assimilate into the majority culture. In the beginning of the post-war period state authorities were also expecting that many of the labor immigrants would return to their original home countries. In these latter cases it was not supposed that the more temporary labor immigrants needed special arrangements in terms of educational and cultural support. The few arrangements that were made in the beginning of the 1950s - in the case of special schools for the Jewish minority and the Estonian minority - the arrangements were justified on the basis of the special war experiences that the members of the group experienced (and thus, not on the basis of any assumed religious and cultural rights). In summary, one could say that the tolerance or recognition of minority cultures/practices was severely circumscribed. Relevant delineations of the forms of tolerance or acceptance in practice have been: in what way, concerning what in what areas, for whom, under which conditions and at what level (official or practical).

In the case of the indigenous population - the Sámi - the members of the group were “tolerated” in the sense that their traditional life style through reindeer herding was emphasized by the state authorities (although in a stereotypical manner). The group was also affected by a discriminative segregation policy during the first half of the 20th century which made their schools insufficient in terms of quality.

However, a more explicit ideological shift happened during the 1960s and the model of assimilation in a more strict sense was seen as unrealistic and undesirable from different political circles. For example, it was seen as incompatible with several of Sweden’s international commitments such as the endorsement of freedom of religion and linguistic rights. The word integration replaced the word assimilation as an objective for the immigrants and a crucial question was how the respect for cultural identity should be reconciled with the equal participation in social life for every citizen. This change also expressed itself later in a succinct way in the Swedish Instrument of Government of 1974 where religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities were granted the right to maintain and develop elements in their own cultures. These remarks were also in tune with article 27 in the UN convention on civil and political rights (1966). Hence, Sweden officially became a multicultural society – an official statement similar to Canada’s and Australia’s official endorsements of multiculturalism. This new multicultural policy expressed itself 1975 in the concepts of equality, freedom of choice and cooperation where the concept freedom of choice (in terms of culture) presented the most heated ideological discussions, not at least because of its assumed tensions with the other two objectives equality and cooperation.

The political problem became how to reconcile freedom of choice with equal living condition and social unity and cooperation among different groups in society. Later on during the 1990s the integration policy emphasized more and more a reciprocal approach to cultural diversity where the main parties, i.e. the majority population and the minorities make efforts to adjust their customs and norms to one another.

The new multicultural policy could be interpreted as a direct challenge to the older assimilation ideology and the political project became how to define and implement the multicultural policy in a more precise manner – especially with reference to so-called “hot topics” in the public debate. The more concrete multicultural programs included the home language reform in the middle of the 1970s, a reform which aimed to give home language training for all language groups irrespectively if the groups included hundreds of thousands or just a hundred of members. This fact reflected an *egalitarian* tradition in the Swedish political culture (also shaped by a tendency to stress centralized uniform solutions, not at least in the field of public education). Support for various cultural associations of immigrant denominations was also shaped in the manner of the traditional Swedish system of associations, which traditionally had emphasized close contacts with the government. This phenomenon reflected a deeply entrenched characteristic of the Swedish political culture during the 20th century namely *corporativism*

The historical background to the current challenges of “multicultural policies” and salient questions of tolerance, intolerance and recognition is presented and analyzed in the first chapter of this comprehensive report. Given the fact that Sweden traditionally has been characterized by a religious uniformity in terms of a Lutheran protestant state church (until the year of 2000) and few experiences of minority legislations concerning culture and politics, various minorities have faced problems in fulfilling their political demands concerning vital cultural interests and political participation. The first chapter includes a presentation of the current situation of minority groups in the Swedish society with a specific focus upon religious minorities such as the Muslim population and the indigenous population of the Sámi. The chapter presents some striking problems of intolerance and discrimination that these groups have faced in their encounters with the state and the majority society.

As in most other countries in the EU, several events and issues related to tolerance and acceptance has occurred in Sweden during the last decade. Some of these challenges are similar in nature and concern shared challenges in different EU-countries even though the political responses and the arguments in the public debates may differ in terms of content and emphasis. The cultural, social and political standing of various Muslim communities is one striking example, illustrated through – for example - the debates on “the veil” in the school and the existence of Muslim faith schools. Some political challenges are, however, more land specific such as the debates around the Sámi parliament, self determination, cultural autonomy and land rights for the Sámi population in Sweden. These debates also occur in Norway, Finland and Russia. These countries have, however, not participated in the Accept pluralism project. This fact makes Sweden unique in the project as it is the only country that has an indigenous population.

The first kinds of challenges – Muslim independent schools and full veiling in schools are presented and analyzed in the second chapter of this comprehensive report. The empirical material consists of interviews with students, teachers, headmasters, civil servants, religious authorities and one representative of a political party. Their attitudes (in terms of tolerance, intolerance and recognition) are described as well as the main arguments for their stances. The latter topic, concerning the standing of the Sámi population’s claim for cultural autonomy and political representation, is presented and analyzed in the third chapter. This case study focuses on the Swedish Sámi Parliament, as it represents the most radical institutionalized form of recognition of the Sámi people (and of any national minority in Sweden). By looking at the news coverage of the Swedish Sámi Parliament since its inauguration in 1993, the chapter analyses how the parliament is conceptualised within the media discourse with reference to the concepts of tolerance, intolerance and recognition. The material consists of national and local daily newspapers during the years 1993-2011.

CHAPTER 1: TOLERANCE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SWEDEN

Geographically, Sweden is located on the Scandinavian Peninsula in north-western Europe, bordering on Finland and Norway; also, it has maritime borders with Denmark, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and is linked to Denmark in the southwest by the Öresund Bridge. The size of the country is 450.000 sq km and the current population is 9,26 million

Sweden has been described as one of the oldest nation states in Europe even though the country has had several multicultural elements, in terms of both cultural contacts (especially with Netherlands, Germany and England) and a diverse population structure with linguistic and ethnic pluralism –not at least through the presence of national minorities. A political tradition from 16th century with a centralized state in the foreground has also been a salient feature as well as a religious homogeneity in terms of the Lutheran church (a state church until the year of 2000). The historical facts concerning the character of the nation state could be seen as contributory causes to the prevalence of a so-called assimilationist model throughout history.

The aim of this report is to describe and analyze some of the more salient challenges that Sweden faces with regard to cultural diversity during the last 30 years. Cultural diversity is here understood as a societal fact, i.e. that Sweden as a country consists of citizens/inhabitants with different cultural backgrounds. This form of diversity has often been assumed to present political and ethical challenges to the society and the state, and with respect to the more regional and local spheres of society.

Even though large-scale migration to Sweden is a post world war II-phenomenon, Sweden has been characterized by cultural encounters between native inhabitants and so-called newcomers for many generations. In addition, cultural encounters between the majority population, national minorities and the indigenous population the Saami people show that the history of Sweden could be seen as multicultural in several ways. This report gives a presentation of this history. It also attempts to show how the multicultural history of Sweden reflects itself in the current situation and political debate.

Since the middle of the 1970s has Sweden officially adopted multiculturalism as a guiding policy with respect to immigrants and national minorities (even though immigrant groups were in focus when the policy was formulated). It is striking that the needs and the interests of so-called internal minorities such as the national minorities were more recognized in the light of the political attention directed towards immigrants, for example, with respect to language rights. The basis for the policy was summarized through the concept “equality, freedom of choice, and cooperation” which was used in the guidelines adopted by Parliament in 1975. In the Swedish Instrument of Government (Regeringsformen = “the constitution”) from 1974 it is also emphasized that various groups defined through language, ethnicity and religion should be supported in order to maintain their cultural heritage and identities. However, these multicultural guidelines were formulated more or less on the basis of the assumption that the main cultural diversity could be exemplified through the so-called man-power or labour immigration that increased during the 1950s and the 1960s. This immigration came mainly from the Mediterranean countries and Central Europe. One of the largest groups was also the Finnish migrants(a group that have migrated to Sweden for many centuries - not at least because of the fact the territories that are now Finnish belonged to Sweden until 1809) Language as a cultural identity marker became more salient than, for example, markers based upon religion (which was more important as an identity marker in previous centuries and defined the boundaries for citizenship) – and - the government focused upon special rights to “home language instruction”.

During the 1970s and the 1980s the migration pattern changed in a radical way. Sweden more or less closed the door for labour migration in the beginning of the 1970s and the following decades were characterized by immigration mainly through family reunification and refugee immigration. In the latter case the sending countries also changed in a striking way in comparison to the previous decades of so-called man power immigration. Now the indeterminacy (and/or the tacit assumptions concerning cultural diversity) in the official guidelines became more or more obvious in political and academic circles. In different governmental reports the question of what should be seen as essential common values in a multicultural society set the tone for the discussions (Roth 1999). Hence, questions

concerning the limits of pluralism grew in political importance. The official answers to these questions were often based upon references to Swedish criminal law and the declarations and conventions on human rights that Sweden at the time has signed and ratified.

One could say that one central challenge regarding cultural diversity in the last three decades has been the gap between theory and practice in the multicultural policies. This phenomenon also applies to Sweden's official endorsement (ratification) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Here the gap could be seen as practical in the sense that the authorities have not been engaged in any substantial measures in, for example, the field of education. Critics of the official guidelines both in political and academic circles have been eager to emphasize that the traditional assimilation model, which characterized Swedish policy for several decades in the post war period is – on the whole - far from dead, and that the cultural diversity which has been endorsed officially has been rather limited in nature. In addition to this “cultural discrimination” Sweden has also, according to some analysts, problems of discrimination both with respect to the labour market and with respect to the provision of various important goods and services such as housing and educational opportunities. These problems have often gone hand in hand. For example, the Romani people have faced both cultural and economic discrimination. In the case of the organized members of the indigenous population - the Saamis – one of their central cultural traits (“the reindeer enterprise”) also coincides with their main economic activity.

However, the demand of special land rights (in the sense of article 169 in the ILO convention) has not been seen favourably by the Swedish government who have had a long tradition of scepticism towards notions such as cultural autonomy and self-determination. Various immigrant groups from non-European countries have also members who are Muslims. These migrants have been exposed to discrimination and harassments with respect to their religion – and – they have, according to some researchers, also faced discrimination in the labour market on the basis of prejudice – either in terms of untenable generalizations concerning their working skills – or – in terms of assumptions concerning values and life styles where some of these values have been seen as problematic and incompatible with the norms of the host society such as gender equity and the basic rights of the children. This latter argumentation was heavily used by the populist and anti-immigration party Sverigedemokraterna in the latest election 2010. Criticism towards the introduction of Sharia law in family matters has also been raised in various political circles (cf. Bauhn & Demirbag-Stéen 2010). However, this kind of proposal has not at all been raised extensively among the various Muslim groups in Sweden (Gardell 2010).

In the next section, the second, follows a very short description of Sweden's formation as a state, as well as an account of the main tenets in Swedish nationalism, and how Swedish national identity is constructed today. The third section, “Main cultural challenges”, contains a description of Sweden's modern immigration history, from the World War II and onwards, with a focus on the two last decades, and how the migrant legislation has changed during that period. Under this heading we also give a short account of four minority groups in present day Sweden; Saami, Roma, Muslims and sub-Saharan Africans, whose claims for acceptance, tolerance and recognition sometimes is met with indecision, opposition or – at least at the informal level of everyday life – with outright aversion. In the section preceding the conclusions, we discuss how questions of tolerance, acceptance and recognition has been articulated and formulated in migration- and minority policy during the last decades, with a focus on the ten previous years.

1.1. National identity and state formation

Commonly it is held that the formation of the Swedish state can be dated to the turn of the first millennium (1000 AD), although the center of the state most certainly had a quite limited command of its peripheries for the next couple of centuries. During the 12th century, Sweden was consolidated, and also conquered Finland, which remained a part of Sweden for the next six centuries. During the last two decades of the middle ages, Sweden fought recurrent wars with the Danes, and during the 15th century the country was forced into a union with Denmark and Norway, in the main under Danish

sovereignty. Economically and culturally, Sweden was under extensive German influence during the late Middle ages, including immigration of missionaries, knights, merchants and craftsmen. The German Hanseatic League also brought Sweden into a wider economic circle as the Swedish economy became part of the larger northern and Western European economy (Runblom 1996, Roth 2004).

Sweden gained independence from Denmark in the 16th century, during the reign of Gustav Vasa and his successors, and the Swedish nation state was considerably consolidated. During the 17th century, after winning wars against Denmark, Russia, and Poland, Sweden-Finland, emerged as a great power by taking direct control of the Baltic region. Still, with a population of scarcely more than 1 million inhabitants, the recurrent wars called for a rigorously organized state power, which could manage the large-scale recruitment of soldiers to the army. Thus, Sweden witnessed a centralization of power and a thoroughly effected bureaucratization as early as in the 17th century, and since then centralization has been one of the constituents in the execution of official power. (Later on, this specific tradition of centralization has also shaped the ways in which multicultural policies have been articulated and – above all - executed in Sweden; see below.)

In the period of consolidation of Swedish political power at the beginning of the early modern era, policies were characterized by pragmatism and a rather open attitude towards immigrants. Foreign ideas and groups were welcomed if they could contribute to state consolidation and development. In this period, many leading merchants, artisans and soldiers were of foreign origin. However, immigrants during the so-called great power era (especially during the 17th century) came in relatively small groups. In most cases the members were linguistically and religiously assimilated after a few generations and were integrated through marriage, residence, education and profession. This applied to the Germans in Stockholm, but also to Scots and the Dutch in Gothenburg who came in smaller numbers even though they also contributed to an important extent to the city life both in terms of culture and trade (Runblom 1995).

In some cases the assimilation policy was clear and strictly organised. Inhabitants in the conquered Danish areas, such as Skåne (Scania) in the south of Sweden, were subjected to a systematic assimilation policy during the second half of the seventeenth century – for example – through the establishment of a new university. Other groups, however, were treated in a more tolerant fashion. French speaking Walloons (with special skills concerning the production of iron) and Finnish speaking Finns engaged in burn- beating agriculture, to some extent enjoyed special status since they managed to maintain their cultural characteristics such as language for some generations (Svanberg & Tydén 1999).

During the heyday of the Swedish empire, several ethnic groups inhabited its territory; not only Swedes, but Finns, Estonians, Germans, Saami, Romas, Russians and others. With the loss of the Baltic and German provinces during the second decade of the 18th century, the territory of the Swedish state gradually came take the shape of what today is considered to be Sweden, a process which was finished in the first years of the 19th century, when Finland was lost to the Russian empire. After the loss of Finland in 1809, the state authorities concentrated on building up Sweden as a national state and demarcating it from the outside world.

In general, the 19th century is often called the century of nationalism; romantic nationalism with its credo "one people, one nation, one station" took root throughout Europe, and in Sweden this meant greatly limited immigration during certain periods, and a highly introverted approach to the national identity and belonging, even though Scandinavianism and a growing Nordicism characterised certain intellectual and political circles, and there also was a considerable import of foreign ideas in connection with early industrialisation. Scandinavianism was an ideology that tried to find common denominators between Norway, Sweden and Denmark through references to old Nordic myths and tradition – especially among students. However, in practice it proved to be politically weak. For example, during the three years war (1848- 1850) Sweden did not provide any practical help to Denmark.

The loss of Finland had a negative impact on multicultural relations more generally. Arctic Scandinavia, which had previously been characterised by intense trading between the Saami, the

Finnish-speaking population, Norwegians and Russians increasingly declined as a multicultural meeting place, now that there was a sharp focus on the geographical frontier with Finland, which had become a Grand Duchy of Russia. Furthermore, parts of northern Sweden became an extended area of colonisation, where the interests of the majority Swedes clashed with those of the Saami over hunting and fishing rights. The growing industrialization of Sweden in the late 19th century also meant that the Saamis and their culture were perceived as more and more irrelevant and obsolete with reference to the development of society (Ingvaldsen, Larsson & Pedersen 2009).

Although the nineteenth-century nation was assiduous in drawing up boundaries – geographical, ethnic and cultural – the frontiers with the outside world remained open in significant respects. For example, a passport was since 1860 not required for inland domestic travels. From the middle of the nineteenth century Sweden was also characterised by emigration, first and foremost to the U.S.A. In general, the causes behind the migration processes were mostly the widespread poverty, but also – at least during the first decades of migration – the lack of religious freedom and an authoritarian social climate with limited freedoms and democracy. Even though some of these migrants chose to return to Sweden after some years in the new country this migration meant a significant loss in terms of population which created a rather open attitude towards newcomers. Sweden's borders remained more or less open until World War I, when a strict law of deportation was introduced.

Thus, one could trace various forms of nationalism in the history of Sweden. From the period of the establishment of the centralized Swedish state until the 19th century a "nationalism" with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church. During the end of 19th and until the middle of the 20th century a racial form of nationalism dominated the public discourse and state policies, a nationalism that was heavily influenced by Social Darwinism and racial biology.¹ This nationalism or ideology also expressed itself through the sterilization laws that were introduced during the 1930s, laws that actually were in play until the middle of 1970. These laws meant that people who were seen as "unfit" for ordinary social life were forced to be sterilized. This targeted group was quite diverse and it included Roma people, mentally disabled and single mothers; cf. Svanberg & Tydén 1999).

After the second world war the official form of nationalism and social belonging changed to more cultural forms of nationalism that were seen as more acceptable in the light of world politics. A common hypothesis among scholars is that the post war period of Sweden has been dominated by a rather thick cultural-ethnic nationalism in spite of an official multicultural ideology – especially during the two last decades of the 20th century (Svanberg & Tydén 1999, Roth 1996). In this national narrative the concept of the welfare state and its assumed Swedish expression ("*folkhemmet*") has played an important role – especially for many of the supporters of the Swedish labour party – Socialdemokraterna. Still, the fact that the Swedish society has become a receiver of migration has changed it in a number of ways. To a certain extent, it has also changed the ways in which Swedes perceive themselves and others.

Nevertheless, the alterations in Swedish national identity which has occurred during the last three decades cannot only – or even primarily – be explained with the reference to the increased presence of other ethnicities. For example, numerous scholars (cf. Löfgren 1987, Daun 1996) have pointed to the fact that notions of modernity, progression and general welfare during the post-world war II period by

¹ Racial biology also influenced Sweden's official immigration and minority policies during this period. According to those policies, certain ethnic groups, such as the European Jews were identified as "undesirable". By the end of the 1930s the door was almost completely closed to Jewish refugees. Jews were not seen as political refugees who meant that their chances of entering Sweden were minimal during the years 1938-1940. However, after 1943 Sweden changed its attitude and over 6.000 Danish Jews were granted a safe haven after their escape from Denmark, a change in mentality that was caused by several motives – among them - mercy and *realpolitik*. (Runblom 1995)

the Swedes themselves was associated with Swedishness. In tandem with the political and economic development in Sweden during the decades after the war, Swedes developed an understanding of themselves as a progressive and modern group of citizens. Following your political inclination, one could emphasize either economic and technological improvement and engineering skills, or the success of the welfare state and the progressive, democratic and humanistic values that accompanied that political project. During the high modernity of Western Europe, Sweden was by many – particularly by the Swedes themselves – perceived as one of the most modern countries in the world, and Swedes as one of its most modern populations.

The new membership in EU 1995 meant that two cornerstones in the earlier Swedish national identity were challenged, i.e. the stance of neutrality and being a role model in “modernity” and welfare state policies. The entry meant that Sweden could no longer see itself as neutral in the sense that was prevailing in the national consciousness and in the official post war rhetoric. The political foundations for a rhetoric of neutrality was established during the 19th century - and - this rhetoric was given different interpretations and applications given the changing political circumstances during the 18th and 19th centuries– where concepts such as non-alliance became especially salient - not at least during the Cold War. After the Second World War Sweden’s neutrality policy also became intertwined with international commitments in support of developing countries within the framework of United Nations (Stråth 2004).

However, the new membership in EU/EEC, which was made possible after the fall of the iron wall and the ending of the Cold War, implied that Sweden no longer could see itself as a special role model in “modernity” and welfare state policies. The entrance into EU 1995 not only diminished Sweden’s independence in foreign policy matters, for example, with reference to its work in United Nations under the banner of neutrality. It also meant that Sweden more and more was seen by the states around the world as just one country among many in the European Community – a state struggling with more or less the same kind of economical and political problems as the other member states (Johansson 2004).

The will to resign from the positions and national images mentioned above varies. Needless to say, those who agree with political arrangements of the welfare state are in general more reluctant to change than those who disagree. But the constituents of the national identity vary with the political and/or normative orientation in other ways as well. For example, the attitude towards migrants and the political arrangements of multiculturalism doubtlessly influence the propensity to accommodate the notion of Sweden as a multicultural and multiethnic country. Some depict Swedish society as benefited by cultural and ethnic diversity, other perceive migrants as intruders, and foster romantic nostalgia for a perceived homogenous and monocultural society in pre-war Sweden (an attitude that is exemplified among many voters of the populist right wing party Sverigedemokraterna).

Some present-day constituents of the Swedish national identity are on the one hand shaped in line with the lingering propensity to regard Swedishness as progressive, modern and democratic, and on the other directly worked out in relation to - and dissociation from - the migrant population and non- European ethnic groups. For example, equality of opportunity between women and men is often referred to – in policy as well in as in public - as a typical Swedish value. In reverse, male migrants from the Middle East are frequently depicted as bearers of patriarchal cultures and thereby alien to the standards of the Swedish society (this argument is often deployed in the public debate by right-wing populists and other groupings that otherwise are quite indifferent to calls for equality between the sexes). A more formal aspect of the national identity in Sweden, the Swedish citizenship, will be discussed further below in this report, under the heading of “The definition of tolerance in Sweden”.

1.2. Main cultural challenges

Swedish society may – as was said before - be characterized as culturally diverse in several senses (i.e., external cultural influences, national minorities and certain migration flows from different parts

of the world given the political crises and turmoil). Sweden did not become a country of immigration in a more substantial sense until after the World War II. It is important also to stress that different policies and official attitudes have appeared with reference to different minorities throughout history. (Roth 2005) In certain periods tolerance or respect has been shown towards certain immigrant groups and not to the national minorities. In later years, after 2000, and in some cases a positive recognition towards some of the national minorities and their customs and traditions has appeared (for example through educational support and language policies), a tolerance or a recognition that has not been granted towards several immigrant communities.

The modern era of immigration to Sweden in the post war period can roughly be divided into four stages, with each stage representing different types of immigrants and immigration: 1) refugees from neighboring countries (1938 to 1948); 2) labor immigration from Finland and southern Europe (1949 to 1971); 3) family reunification and refugees from developing countries (1972 to 1989), and 4) asylum seekers from southeastern and Eastern Europe, and the Middle east (1990 to present) and the free movement of EU citizens within the European Union. As a result of these differing flows, the once-dominant Scandinavians, who composed well over half of Sweden's foreign-born population in 1960, made up only one-fourth of the foreign born in 2004 (Westin 2006). The population of Sweden today (2010) is 9,26 million and it is estimated that more than 12 percent of the population is of so-called foreign background.

Since the years following the end of World War II, the pattern of migration to Sweden is similar to other Western European countries (Runblom 1994). From the late forties to the early sixties, the migration was characterized by free movement between the European Community member states and the Nordic countries. In 1954, the Nordic countries set up a common labour market, which enabled large-scale migration from Finland to Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s. A total of 550,000 Finns migrated to Sweden during this time period. Substantial numbers also arrived from Denmark, Norway and Italy. Much of the immigration was a planned recruitment by Swedish enterprises and the Swedish Labour Market Board, and formal agreements were made between the Swedish government and governments in Central and Southern European countries. Through Sweden's success in remaining outside the war, the country had a comparative advantage in the form of intact industrial facilities, which demanded an increased labour force after the end of the war – a situation which also characterises Switzerland.

Swedish companies also turned to Yugoslavia and Greece for manpower, which initiated a substantial migration from these countries - just about 60,000 and 20,000 labour migrants, respectively. During the sixties, the labour market migration tended to be more spontaneous. Besides the recruitment of foreign labour carried out by major industrial companies, an increasing number of migrants started to come to Sweden in the 1960s on their own accord to find jobs. The flow of immigrants peaked in 1970. Sweden did not set up a guest worker program like the German Federal Republic or Switzerland in order to meet labour demands. On the contrary, Sweden had a policy of permanent residence that treated labour migrants as future citizens (Westin 2006).

The spontaneous labour migration halted around 1973 in most West European countries, as a reaction to the so-called oil-crises and the following economic recession. Still, migration to Sweden halted one year earlier, just before the crisis, mainly as result of political pressure from the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO. This marks the beginning of a new phase, during which migration is dominated by refugees. Earlier, in the 1950s and 1960s, those granted refugee status were placed within the same general framework as labour migrants, and the National Board of Labour was responsible for their resettlement. When labour migration halted, the institutional arrangements changed, and refugee status became important as a ground for permanent residence (Hammar 1985, Westin 2006).

The first non-European refugees that were accepted by Sweden were the Ugandan Asians expelled in 1972. 70,000 were forced to leave, and roughly 1,000 came to Sweden. In 1973, about 5,000 refugees from Chile were accepted after the coup against Chilean President Salvador Allende. All in all, Sweden accepted 18,000 refugees from Chile between 1973 and 1989. At the same time, 6,000 refugees from

other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru also came to Sweden. In addition, many refugees came from the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s. Christian Orthodox Syrians sought asylum because of religious persecution, and the Kurds were another salient group, seeking asylum on the grounds of political persecution, and emigrating from Eastern Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. The largest groups from the Middle East were from Iran and Iraq; the Iranians arrived in the 1980s, mainly as a result of the war against Iraq and in opposition to the Islamic government in Tehran. Kurdish Iraqis started to arrive in the 1990s, mostly in response to increasing political oppression (Westin & Dingu-Kyrklund 2003).

During this period, many migrants were granted asylum on humanitarian grounds. This allowed the immigration authorities meet the criticism from those liberal critics who claimed that Sweden didn't live up to its commitments to the UN. By not recognizing these asylum seekers as UN Convention refugees, they did not enjoy the full rights to protection as written in the convention. As Charles Westin (2006) points out, Swedish authorities instead interpreted "humanitarian grounds" without having to follow international conventions. Thus, the authorities could change their interpretations if necessary.

During the 1980s, the perception of an increased flow of refugees impelled the government to rule that political asylum applications would be treated more strictly and in accordance with the statements of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Then, humanitarian grounds for asylum would no longer be used. It is commonly held that this marks the beginning of new phase in Swedish immigration policy, when a stricter asylum policy was implemented. This step coincided with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

In the early 1990s, a significant number of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Kosovo arrived to Sweden, and the government introduced visa requirements for persons coming from the former Yugoslavia. Still, there was support in the public opinion for assisting refugees from the Balkans, and 50,000 asylum seekers (mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina) were granted temporary residence without having their individual cases tried. Today, immigrants continue to come from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo through family reunification provisions. Moreover, asylum seekers have continued to come from Iraq, above all since the 2003 US invasion (Westin 2006).

In the middle of the 1990s, Sweden became a member of the European Union (EU), and this exerted a profound influence on Swedish migration policy. In 1996, Sweden became a party to the Schengen agreement, which allows for free movement of people across all Member States. From now on, other EU citizens were allowed to work and live in Sweden. Still, most cross-border movement affecting Sweden is from (and to) neighbouring Nordic countries, although Germany sends the most labour migrants. In relation to the EU-15, migration *from* Sweden has commonly been slightly greater than migration *to* Sweden - with an exception for migration from/to Denmark and Finland. In comparison to non-European immigration the numbers of EU immigrants are small, though (Westin 2006).

The table below (Table 1) gives a short survey of the main minority and immigrant groups in Sweden, which is the five national native minority groups and the 20 largest immigrant groups, categorized with reference to country of origin. In the category of Swedish Finns, the numbers for the migrant and native groups are added together. More than the actual size of the group, we will also try to show some of the mayor dimensions of difference and differentiation which are regularly paid attention to. The parenthesis enclosing the "x" in some of the columns indicate that the status may be uncertain, contested or in a state of transition. For instance, it could be questioned whether having English as first language is an emblem of difference in everyday Swedish life or not. It may also be noted, that since some of the migrants from Turkey and Syria - such as the Assyrians and the Syrians - are Christians, they do not denote alterity in the same way as Muslim migrants do, although the orthodox Christian practices by those groups significantly differ from the forms which are exercised by the native protestant population.

Moreover, some groups that earlier has been "othered" with reference to the racialized category of *invandrare* (immigrant) has to gradually become associated with a general, neutral European identity. There is a clear tendency in Sweden that migrants from "western" countries - such as Denmark, Germany

or the United States – very rarely if ever becomes categorized as “invandrare”, but the extension of that category is variable. Being categorized as “invandrare” is in general an experience shared by migrants from the Asia, Latin America, Africa and – to certain extent – Eastern Europe, and not seldom also by their children, even though they may be born in Sweden and hence lack experience of migration per se (Mulinari & Neergaard 2004). Rather than depicting an experience of migration, the category denotes a prescribed alterity.

Table 1: Main Minority Groups in Sweden and their Dimensions of Difference

Dimensions of difference	Number (thousands)	Citizenship	Racialized	Religious	Linguistic	Perceived “cultural distance”
National minorities						
Swedish Finns (born in Sweden) (born in Finland)	675 (500) (175)	X			(X)	1-2
Meänkieli *	40-70	X			(X)	-
Roma **	30-65	X	X			5-6
Jews **	25	X	(X)	X		4
Saami **	17	X	X		X	-
Immigrant minorities (country of origin)						
Iraq	118	X	X	X	X	5-6
former Yugoslavia	71	X	(X)		X	4-5*)
Poland	68	X	X		X	3-4
Iran	60	X	X	X	X	5-6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	56	X	X	X	X	4-5
Germany	48	X			X	2-3
Denmark	46	X				-
Norway	44	X				1-2
Turkey	41	X	X	(X)	X	5
Somalia	32	X	X	X	X	5-6
Thailand	29	X	X	X	X	4-5
Chile	28	X	X		X	4-5
Lebanon	24	X	X	X	X	-
China	21	X	X	X	X	5-6
United Kingdom	20	X			(X)	2-3
Syria	20	X	X	(X)	X	-
Other forms of categories						
Muslims ***	100-250	X	X	X	X	-
Sub Saharan Africans	80	X	X	X	X	-

Sources: SCB (Statistiska centralbyrån), except where indicated: * Sveriges Radio, ** Nationalencyklopedin, *** Stenberg (2002). Perceived “cultural distance” is a measure utilized by Mella & Palm (2009:46). *) The number comes from the categories “croatians” and “serbs”.

The diversity of national minorities and the indigenous population the Saamis has been recognized through Sweden's decision to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Hence, the following groups and languages are ascribed national minority status: Saami (even though the self-perception often has been "an indigenous population"), Tornedal Finns (Meänkieli or Tornedals Finnish), Roma (Romany Chib) and Jews (Yiddish), Finns (Finnish). This special recognition of the national minorities constitutes a break with earlier political traditions. The multicultural policy of 1975, as exemplified through the notion of freedom of choice (see below), had a more integrated or uniform stance towards national minorities and immigrant communities. For example, home language instruction was initiated for the national minorities at the same time and on the same premises as for the immigrant groups.

The size of the minority groups in Sweden is hard to estimate because of the lack of ethnic statistics, which is forbidden in Sweden, as is statistics concerning religious background. However, more informal statistics circulates which could give a clue of the approximate numbers. What sets Sweden, Norway and Finland apart from other countries in Europe is the presence of an indigenous population – the Saamis - which presents special political and ethical challenges in comparison to other groups. The most striking issue has been the case of land rights and the debates concerning the importance of signing the ILO convention.

In general, it is possible to claim that Swedes has accepted the multicultural condition. At least, they report a relatively positive experiences of and attitudes towards migration and migrants (Mella & Palm 2008, 2009). More than 60 % of the population had good or very good *experiences* of working, studying or in other ways interacting with persons with immigrant background. No more than 14 % had negative or very negative experiences, and just above 20 % claim that they have no experiences of this specific kind of interaction. The experiences are not randomly distributed in the population though. A number of demographic or social factors have an effect: there is a positive correlation between level of education, sex/gender and the experiences concerned. The data shows data women and highly educated are more positive. The more educated a person were, the more positive his or her experiences were. But there are no significant findings when it comes to age; the differences are too small.

This is not the whole picture, however. There is a body of research that also reports the incidence of intolerance towards migrants and minority groups – which may manifest itself in such forms as discrimination, harassment, insults, threats and physical violence. For example, a number of reports from a governmental committee on *structural* discrimination (cf. Pincus 1994) shows that recurrent patterns of everyday racism and indirect discrimination characterizes or affect the migrant existence in Sweden (Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2005, Neergaard 2006). Other studies point to the proliferation of exclusionary mechanisms on the labour market, primarily targeting migrants (Behtoui 2004, 2006). On the other hand, some researchers states that assumptions of discrimination in the labour market are exaggerated, and that the problems for newcomers have more to do with the lack of an appropriate education and a changing economy/ labour market which also has affected the opportunities for several members of the majority population in a negative way (Carlson & Rooth 2007).

The scope and signification of ethnic discrimination has, from time to time, been intensely debated in Swedish academia, and it's hard to draw a conclusion in this specific matter. Nevertheless, it would definitely not make sense to deny the occurrences of racism and discrimination in everyday life of many migrants and minorities. It is relevant in this context to mention that segregation (such as housing segregation) may have its ground in various forms of discrimination and is often structured on the basis of non-Swedishness and not necessarily on the basis of specific ethnic backgrounds. Hence, the poorer neighbourhoods in the suburbs of the major cities of Sweden such as Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö are genuinely multi-ethnic, consisting of people of many origins (Bosnia, Chile, Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon etc; Westin 2003).

The lack of tolerance and respect that native and/or migrant minority groups in Sweden experience come from different sources, and have different causes. Sometimes it targets groups which are ethnically defined, sometimes groups which are religiously defined. Sometimes it targets singular norms and customs, which could be more or less shared by different groups. And even though the social category of “race” is rejected in mainstream media and public debate, and common only in the discourses of right-wing extremist social movements, some exclusionary practices may undoubtedly be defined as “racialized” or overtly racist. In the following section, we will review the position of a number of minority groups in Sweden, whose practices and worldviews sometimes are met with a lack of respect and tolerance, and also suffer from outright discrimination. Following the argument outlined above, we will focus on different forms of group formations – religiously, ethnically and “racially” defined – and how they are treated by the ethno-nationalistic defined majority.

Saami

The Sámi are Europe’s northernmost and the Nordic countries’ only indigenous people. Saami ancestral lands span an area of approximately 388,350 km², almost the size of Sweden. The Saami languages are a part of the Finno-Lappic group of the Uralic language family. Traditionally, the Saami have pursued a variety of livelihoods, including coastal fishing, fur trapping, and sheep herding. Their best known means of livelihood is semi-nomadic reindeer herding. Only about 10% of the total Saami population is connected with it, but it remains an important industry among Saami in Sweden. The estimated (inofficial) number of Saami living in Sweden is somewhere between 20 000 and 35 000, of which 8 000 has registered for voting in the Saami parliament.

Trade between externals and the Saami began during the middle ages, as did the colonization of the Saami area and the exploitation of its resources by non-Saami, and this process was intensified during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Following the consolidation of the states adjacent to the Saami area, several states claimed sovereignty in the region and the Saami were forced to pay tax to several crowns. Also, Christianization followed during this process of intensified pressure from the outside. In time, the nations that had claimed Saami as their own divided up the Saami area.

In 1751, the border was drawn up by Sweden and Denmark-Norway, dividing Saami along the mountain ridge from Jämtland to Finnmark. The border between Sweden and Finland was established in 1809, and in 1826 the border between Norway and Russia was established, thereby completing the division of Saami. Despite the colonization and division of the Saami area, the Saami people were able to maintain some independence. When the national border between Sweden and Denmark-Norway was established, the Saami were guaranteed ownership of land and water in what was known as the Codicil to the Border Treaty (1751).

The land issue continues to be of uttermost importance for the Saami group, even in the present. With the practice of reindeer herding, which is central to the Saami way of life and often regarded as the defining feature of Sami culture, the Saami exhibit a slightly different form of territorial organization, which could be characterized as flexible and overlapping, in comparison to the modern property system of the European states which colonized them. Contradictions between these two conceptions of territoriality have been a defining feature of state-Sami relations in the following ways:

1. Nordic states viewed the Sami as nomadic, thus having no ownership of their land.
2. Traditional Sami activities, notably reindeer herding, were viewed as illegitimate or backwards, resulting in the privileging of modern forms of land use such as agriculture.
3. Where states did feel an impulse to protect the Sami way of life, they viewed nomadic pastoralism as economically non-viable, prompting systems of administration which increased state regulation of herding (Forrest 1998:ii, cf. Eide 2001).

During the last decades, roughly one thousand land owners has taken Saami reindeer herds to court, in an effort to keep them from grazing reindeer in private forests (Borchert 2001). The landowners base their law suits on claims that the reindeers rub the antlers on young trees, which damages their private pine plantations. The courts that try the numerous cases require proof that the use of the land in question is a part of an ancient tradition, and in general they require proofs that are different from the ones the defendant Saami has provided, namely written documents that demonstrate an almost century long period of continuous grazing-use for the land under dispute. The history and traditions of the Saami are mainly oral, and these kinds of documents simply do not exist, however. The claims of the court has, because of that, been acknowledges as absurd from a Saami viewpoint, especially in those cases where archeological evidence of Saami land use can be found (Borchert 2001, p. 42).

Needless to say, since this conflict influence one of the cornerstones – if not *the* cornerstone – of Saami economy, way of living and group identity, it has far-reaching consequences for the group (Borchert 2001). Threats to the reindeer herding has a potential to undermine notions of autonomy, self-determination, group distinctiveness and cohesion – at least among Saami in Sweden. According to Saami organizations, the claims of the landowners challenge the customary rights of the Saami people. Still, the judgment went in favor of the Saami defendants on the lower juridical instances, but no verdict has been recorded in the Supreme Court yet.

Furthermore, reindeer breeding and keeping has often been counteracted on local level. There are a number of examples when conflicts have arisen around land rights. The rights and the interests of farmers and landowners in northern Sweden have clashed with the rights and the interests of the Saami, when migratory reindeers have damaged plants in forests and arable land. Although the rights of the Sami in part are regulated in law, the prejudices and negative stereotyping to Sami among other people living in northern Sweden has been accompanied with a marked lack of tolerance towards their rights to preserve their main industry, and thereby their way of living.

A quick glance at the Swedish history of ideas shows that the knowledge on the Saami group that was produced during the 19th and early 20th century, and circulated in academia and mainstream media, was informed of the racializing stereotypes and representational conventions that were common back then. The Saami were regularly depicted as the inferior Other, belonging to another race and not having reached the same level of civilization as the rest of the population. In line with this frame of interpretation, collected from racial biology and Social Darwinism, segregation laws were formulated during the first decades of the twentieth century.

Segregation took a number of forms. The Saami group suffered from this in a number of ways. One example in the field of education was the nomadic "kåta schools" introduced after 1913, where Saami children received an education that was said to be adapted to their specific life conditions in the Arctic tundra. Here the Saami received an inadequate education characterized by stereotypes and insufficient means, which reinforced their alienation from the Swedish state and the rest of society. A group such as the Saami has been exposed to both segregation and assimilation strategies from the state depending upon the sphere of activity and the specific time and context. With respect to religion (Lutheran Christianity) the general stance from the state could often be characterizes as assimilatory been assimilation while segregation strategies often prevailed in areas such as social life, work and education.

For several decades during the 20th century, speaking Saami languages was not allowed in the elementary school during school time. Sami wasn't even a school subject in the nomadic school. The Sami children were not given the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own language. It was quite common among older generations of Sami of have Saami only as a social language, and use Swedish to read and write. Thus, the right to education in their own languages has been a key issue for Saami activists.

The generation exposed to unpleasant experiences from their school years chose to a greater part to not speak Sami with their own children. As adults, many of the 60's and 70's generations cannot speak Sami "although they should be able to". They have Sami as a passive language to a more or less degree. It can be a rather steep threshold to reclaim one's language, and many speak of "psychological barriers". Here there is a need for great education efforts and a positive attitude from the surrounding society, both the Sami and the Swedish (Sametinget 2011).

Still, the right to education in Saami language is seldom contested in present day Sweden. There is a state funded Saami school in Sweden today, centrally administrated by Sameskolstyrelsen (SamS, *The Sami Education Board*), although education in the Saami language at primary or secondary level did not exist until 1976, when the Swedish government introduced home language education for immigrant children and linguistic minorities. The goals of Sami school education are stated in the curriculum. The Sami school is responsible that every pupil after graduating: a) is familiar with his or her Sami background and cultural heritage, b) can speak, read and write in Saami. In addition to this the regular goals of the compulsory school system apply. According to the Saami School Decree all education should be given in Sami and Swedish, and the subject Saami is obligatory in every grade (SamS 2011).

Thus, it could reasonably be argued that the right to education in Saami language is publically and officially accepted and recognized, and could be described through the notion of recognition. In reverse, the land claims by Saami are neither publically nor officially accepted and/or recognized in their entirety. As noted earlier, the demand of special land rights - in the sense of article 169 in the ILO convention - has not been seen favourably by the Swedish government, which has had a long tradition of scepticism towards notions such as cultural autonomy and self-determination. Hence, this negative stance could be described with the notion of non-tolerance.

As noted above, there are several and recurrent disputes between Saami reindeer herds and non-Saami land-owners on the local level, and between juridical bodies and Saami actors on regional and national level. As a guarded conclusion, it could reasonably be said that the conflicts over land-use remains to be a question where Saami claims are neither fully accepted nor recognized – although it would be a mistake to categorize the viewpoint of Swedish authorities as totally indifferent or neglectful of Saami land interests.

Roma

As in many other European countries, the discrimination, hostility and lack of tolerance of Roma have a long history. For example, during the so-called Age of Liberty (1718- 1772), when Sweden began its retreat to small power status, policies regarding cultural divergence were tightened. There was a particular focus on religious and behavioural "deviants". As a typical example of increasing xenophobia during this period, the historian Hugo Valentin cites a statute of 1741 which decreed that

all Jews, Savoyards, tightrope walkers, actors and other jesters ... Tartars and Gypsies who with diverse ungodliness, fortune telling and lies cause great trouble and inconvenience to ordinary people, and also other such foreigners, who with barometers, different sorts of glass, tea and such less necessary goods arrive and who abscond with honest money" shall immediately be expelled from the kingdom (Valentin 1964).

Although members of the Roma group today share the formal civil and political rights which are included in Swedish citizenship, it could be argued that they lack some of the significant social rights in terms of their fulfillment such as educational rights. During the span of the 20th century, they were more or less forced to abandon their main industries, and the life forms associated with it; this process was completed in the 1960s. Since then, the policy towards Roma from official bodies has been characterized by different inclusionary - rather than excluding - measures, albeit seldom designed "from the inside", in other words how the needs of the group are assessed by the members themselves. Moreover, their religious or cultural rights have not often been denied by official bodies. (In this

context it is relevant to claim that the Roma group is heterogeneous in terms of religious belongings, depending upon the members historical backgrounds. However, in recent years many members of the Roma community have gravitated towards Christian evangelical churches in Sweden; cf. Roth 2005.)

Since Sweden does not allow for ethnic registration, and thus do not have statistical databases relevant for an estimation of the living conditions among the Roma, all descriptions of the social conditions must be tentative. However, other sources of information concludes that the living conditions of Roma in Sweden is relatively poor, and that they are more or less excluded from mainstream Swedish society (cf. SOU 2010:55). One can discern a strong pattern of social, economic and political exclusion and marginalization. Living standards are lower than average. Considerable health problems are reported, and life expectancy is judged to be clearly below average. At a rough estimate, 80 percent of adult Roma are unemployed. Most Roma children do not complete primary school, and very few continue to secondary school. This being so, even fewer reaches university level.

Discrimination is widespread. Attitudes towards Roma are more negative than towards any other group, and they suffer strongly from labour market exclusion. According to Geza Nagy (2007, in Palusuo 2008), the unemployment rate is considerably over the average. The exclusion is, Nagy continues, a consequence of several factors, such as failures in the educational system, lack of demand for services from “traditional” Roma industries, and widespread negative attitudes towards Roma in general. The governmental white paper quoted above draws a similar conclusion:

Attitudes towards Roma are more negative than towards any other group. They remain the most clearly discriminated group on the labour market at all stages: when they seek a job, during the interview, and in case they did get the job they risk losing it if their ethnicity becomes known. (SOU 2010:55, p. 36, cf. Westin & Tan Marti 2008)

Moreover, discrimination in the housing sector is also reported, in public as well as private housing; discrimination within the housing market stands out as a very large problem for Romanies, it is concluded in report from the governmental agency Diskrimineringsombudsmannen (DO, *the Equality Ombudsman*; DO 2003), which put together complaints from Roma during the last two decades. Some of the complaints concern statements where Romanies are named as undesirable tenants. They also encounter negative attitudes, prejudice and insults from neighbours. There are examples of tenants protesting with name lists against Roma who about to move in to a building, and of neighbours organising against them moving into an area, out of fear that their residences will depreciate in value.

Since they have met far-reaching difficulties in entering the labour market, and also been subject to negative stereotyping and ethnic discrimination, and partly (or mainly) as a consequence of those excluding activities, they have not been able to obtain the rights implied by the social citizenship of the welfare state (Marshall 1950). Their access to the political rights implied in the notion of citizenship may also be questioned, at least in the sense that a lack of representation can be noted. “Roma are virtually absent from politics” (SOU 2010:55, s. 36) the above mentioned white paper claims; their civic organisations are weakly developed and they lack official representation as a minority, and there is no “umbrella” organisation on the national level.

Apart from the general exclusion processes, a certain lack of recognition can be noted, in the educational system (Rodell Olgac 2006) and elsewhere. For instance, children do not have full access to education in their mother tongue as stipulated in law (Skolverket 2007), and there is no or little mentioning of Roma as a national minority in school books. Moreover, Roma cultural institutions and media are few and with scarce resources and do not have a secure financial situation. The culture and language of Roma Travellers is endangered, much because of the stigma connected with being a Traveller.

Some of the cases of discrimination that have been filed at the DO (DO 2003), and that concerns discrimination in everyday life, may also give a hint of how the lack of tolerance and recognition vis-à-vis Roma in Sweden is constituted. In general, it concerns the forms of discrimination that makes goods and services unavailable. Not making goods and services available is form of discrimination treated under the Swedish law on discrimination (2003:307) in the Penal Code. Discrimination concerning goods and services is often about Roma being denied access to shops, restaurants and hotels, or in other ways are being treated in a discriminatory fashion by establishments.

In a questionnaire survey in the DO report, 27 percent report that they have been refused entry into shops, on one or several occasions, and almost 40 percent state that they have been refused entry into restaurants during the past two years. The same numbers say that they have been treated badly in shops or restaurants during the past year. In the report, it becomes obvious the acts of discrimination occur when one or more female members of a group wears the traditional dress that many women among the Kaali Roma - a group that migrated from Finland to Sweden in the 1950:s and 60:s – wear (DO 2003, p. 18). It seems like that this dress, consisting of blouses with embroideries and heavy skirts of thick, black velvet, becomes a highly visible symbol for a rejected Roma identity, which triggers of a discriminatory agency.

Thus, it can be said that Roma claims on acceptance and recognition has been met at the official level – but only to a certain degree. What is lacking is the financial and organizational official support that follows from at least some strong definitions of recognition, i.e. the definition inherent in the official Swedish multiculturalism from 1975. Following the argument outlined just above, it could also be argued that tolerance and recognition towards some cultural practices which express a Roma identity is absent in the everyday life of mainstream Swedish society. For instance, the (female) followers of the traditional dress-code of Kaali Roma identity runs the risk of discriminated in restaurants, hotels and/or shops.

Muslims

As in many other European countries, at least west European, Muslims in general and religious Muslims in particular has been singled out in Sweden as a matter of interest, suspicion and debate during the decade following the attack on World Trade Centre, New York, in 2001. Muslims has become a highly visible minority in Swedish society, and the enactment of Muslim belief practices has caught public attention in many different ways. Still, the attention is frequently mixed with suspicion, and anti-Muslim sentiments and opinions have been reported, as well as relatively high frequency of outright discrimination. Against the background of militant forms of Islam and terrorist attacks - lately the suicide bomber in Stockholm in December 2010 - generalizations and stereotypes about Islam and Muslims have become more widespread and amounts to “Islamophobia” especially among members of right-wing populist parties (Gardell 2010).

What characterizes the group in itself? Arguably, Sweden has one of the most heterogeneous Muslim populations of all Western European countries. They have different ethnic, political, linguistic and/or educational backgrounds. They come from over forty different countries in north and sub-Saharan Africa; from Arabic, Turkish or Persian parts of Asia, and from Europe. They come from secularized states as Turkey, religious states such as Iran, and from former socialistic states such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and several of the new states that formerly belonged to the Soviet Union. Clearly, this heterogeneity makes it hard to make categorizations about Muslims in general (Sander 2004).

The Islamic institutionalization in Sweden has, from a slow start in the 1960s and 1970s, begun to move into a consolidation phase during the past few years has. Swedish Muslims have now achieved what Åke Sander (2004) calls a “rudimentary institutional completeness”; i.e. many of the most essential Islamic and Muslim institutions - such as mosques, *musallas*, Muslim periodicals, Muslim burial grounds, pre-schools, schools and shops - now exists in Sweden. According to Sander, it could

be argued that they are manifesting a physical and ideological presence in Sweden, and more and more Swedes are beginning to consider them an integral part of Swedish domestic religious life, as Swedish Muslims.

Despite the fact that the institutionalization of Islam has developed during the last decade, it could also be said that many Muslims find it hard to enact their religiosity in a proper way, according to the norms and beliefs inherent in their faith (Sander 2004). One reason for this could, according to Åke Sander (2004), be found in the discrepancies between different perspectives on religion; or, more exactly, different viewpoints on the notion, nature, position and place of religion in a society. In Sweden, there is widespread notion – which probably is common in other secular countries as well – that religion should not be allowed to affect your behaviour outside your very private sphere, in the public life. Society, its institutions and representatives should be impartial, rational and objective, i.e. non-religious and secular. With this slightly secular perspective on religion, it could be said that it has disappeared as common or wide-spread “frame of interpretation”, as way of see, interpret and understand how other people act and think.

When applying this “secular frame of interpretation”, it could be hard to understand that some religion could mean something else than for a secular person, and that the scope and application of religiously motivated norms, rules, attitudes and practices by far exceed what is generally perceived as appropriate in (for example) Sweden, viz. confined to the private sphere. The presence of a “secular frame of interpretation” might also explain why so many expressions of Islamic faith have received negative attention during the last decade. For example, the construction of Mosques does seldom take place in silence; frequent and high-pitched voices of rejection and disapproval are common, and when the buildings once are completed, the congregations receive numerous threats and insults (Gardell 2010). The opposition is evident (Integrationsverket 2005, 2006), and two mosques have been burned down. Moreover, women wearing burqa or niqab report being harassed in public (Berge & Manga 2006, Gardell 2010). Widespread calls for prohibition of burqa and niqab are raised. Those acts of depreciation are not only caused by different views on religiosity or piety; as Mattias Gardell (2010) has argued, one can also track the effect of *Islamophobic* ways of thinking in present-day Sweden. There is a tendency to understand and depict the agency of migrants from Muslim societies in general and Islamic believers in particular as unreflective, rigid and fundamentalist.

Nevertheless, it must be said that certain claims from active Islamic believers are met in Sweden, at least formally. Despite the limitations discussed in the beginning, the institutionalization of Islam is in process. The most basic religious needs have been met, with certain degree of support from local municipalities, the Swedish church, etc. On the other hand, a wide-spread (but actually declining; cf. Gardell 2010, pp. 223-24) suspicion - or even contempt - to certain belief practices continues to constitute an obstacle to the enactment of Islam in Sweden, and towards a fully developed recognition, or even acceptance, of Islam in Sweden.

Sub-Saharan Africans

The groups of Sub-Saharan migrants in Sweden come up to just above 80 000 persons. They are composed of the most nationalities from the African continent, but among the most numerous groups we find migrants from Somalia (32 000), Ethiopia (13 000), Eritrea (9 000), Gambia (3 500) and Uganda (3 000). (As a geographical term, *Sub-Saharan* refers to the area of the African continent which lies south of the Sahara. The political definition of Sub-Saharan Africa, instead, covers African countries which are fully or partially located south of the Sahara.)

Different measures for estimating the economic integration of migrants in Sweden suggest concordant conclusions: Sub-Saharan migrants face the most far-reaching obstacles in their efforts to get a position in the Swedish society. African-born migrants are the group most likely to be unemployed or subjected to discrimination in the Swedish labour market, and employers perceive African-born as more different than the European-born migrants. For example, the chance for a migrant from Sub-

Saharan Africa to find a job which matches his/her education or training is over 60 percent less compared to a native Swede (Integrationsverket 2002). Also, the most low-paid groups in the Swedish labour market are found among the African born migrants (Englund 2003).

The relative lack of economical integration in Swedish society is to a certain degree followed by a lack of social integration. Numerous studies of “perceived cultural distance” among native Swedes point in that direction (Lange 1992, Mella & Palm 2008, 2009, 2010). The category of Africans or specific African nationalities such as the Somali (Mella & Palm 2008, 2009, 2010) is thus placed at the far end of a continuous scale where notions of similarity or difference should be measured. Obviously, what is perceived and constructed as “African culture” - or “Somali culture” - among Swedes moulds a *gestalt* that signifies difference, or even radical difference. Needless to say, this affects those who are forced to represent this alterity. In-depth studies (Sawyer 2000, 2008) and reports (Gärding 2009) of the identity formations of young people of African descent in Sweden shows that the experience of racial categorization and harassment is a manifest part of their everyday life – although the strategies developed to cope with it differ in a variety of ways.

A number of scholars (Mulinari & Neergaard 2005, Sawyer 2000, 2008) claim that the willingness to acknowledge the scope of those expressions are very limited, for instance among scholars, civil servants and other “key actors”. During a fieldwork on the formation of Black, African identities in Sweden, social anthropologist Lena Sawyer noted that

National and transnational stories of Sweden and Swedes are often imbued with a particular righteous morality. And though Swedish informants generally did not discuss, or even name, the Atlantic slave trade I would argue that Sweden's absence from this past subtly imbues this (national) locality and people with a particular moral character in relation to discussions of racism. [...] If Swedish morality is achieved, in part, through exclusion from hegemonic historiographies of the Atlantic slave trade, Swede's often built upon narratives of peripherality and marginality to continental European history when discussing racism. [...] If at all, in Sweden racism was most often described as the violent behaviors of deviant, confused, unemployed boys and men who lived in small rural communities. Their stories all seemed to quietly say “racism is something foreign to the Swedish society” as they metaphorically pointed their fingers outward, away from themselves, and sought to locate the “real” racists (Sawyer 2008, pp. 16-17)

Thus, following Sawyer's argument, the historical experience of being located at the margins of the Europeans society has facilitated the formation of a national identity in which a particular righteous morality and a denial of racism is a characteristic feature. Although a righteous morality generally could be viewed as a part of ethnic or national self-presentations, not only in Sweden (cf. Eriksen 1993), it may still be claimed that this quite widespread and generic denial make it hard for young persons of sub-Saharan descent to cope with the actual occurrences of racism (cf. Sawyer 2005).

In tandem with the argument that we outlined about the acceptance and recognition of Roma culture, that the prevalence of racist or racializing stereotypes make up certain obstacles to the enactment of the norms, values and expressions that sub-Saharan Africans share, whether they are related to an ethnic or national identity, or a general African identity. Although there's a lack of research on this particular topic in Sweden, it might be said that stereotyping, discrimination and hostility have a restraining effect to the public display of cultural expressions. Still, there is no particular cultural expression of sub-Saharan African groups in Sweden that has been opposed as frequent and large-scale as the opposition to the construction of mosques and the wearing of burqa or the niqab.

1.3. The definition of tolerance in Sweden

Policies towards different immigrant and minority groups during the first two decades of the post-war era were in general purely assimilatory, and the tolerance for or recognition of various cultural identities and customs was by and large absent from the official political agenda and the public

discussion. In addition, there was no systematic reception policy. The period of assimilationist policy was not put to an end until 1975, when multiculturalism became an important element in the Swedish model of welfare-state politics. The new policy established the principles that have guided Sweden's immigration policy ever since: According to Ålund and Schierup (1991), Sweden's multicultural immigrant policy could be viewed as a rejection of a "guest worker" strategy for labour import; with its quest to create social equality among ethnic groups, respect for immigrants ways of living, and with an emphasis on providing immigrants and ethnic minorities with resources to exercise political influence. In Swedish multiculturalism, welfare ideology objectives focused on "equality" (*jämlikhet*) occupy a central position. Other policy objectives include "freedom of choice" (*valfrihet*) and "partnership" (*samverkan*).

Tomas Hammar (1985) summarizes the original intent of these three principles - which paraphrases the French revolution's *liberte, egalite, et fraternite* - as follows:

The goal of *equality* implies the continued efforts to give immigrants the same living standard as the rest of the population. The goal of *freedom of choice* implies that public initiatives are to be taken to assure members of ethnic and linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. The goal of *partnership* implies that the different immigrant and minority groups on the one hand and the native population on the other both benefit from working together (Hammar 1985: 33)

These goals were formulated in the mid-1970s, and it was implicated in this program that foreigners not only would enjoy the same legal privileges as Swedish citizens, but also that the general public should accept multicultural aims. Moreover, the proclaimed egalitarian and multicultural ideology has substantial legal backing. In most important matters, formal equality before the law holds true, as for example equal access to unemployment contributions and a large number of other social welfare benefits.

Officially, there has been a strong emphasis on the formula "same rights-same responsibilities" in public policymaking. Models of ideas of differentiated citizenship, implying different rights and provisions depending on one's groups status, has not gained wide-spread acceptance in the public debate, and have never exerted any influence on Swedish citizenship legislation. As Dag Blank and Mattias Tydén notes, "one salient characteristic of the Swedish welfare state during the 20th century has been a model of general and uniform policies, for all citizens" (Blank & Tydén 1995, p. 64). It is obvious that this political tradition influences contemporary legislation and policy. Nevertheless, Sweden introduced a new citizenship law in 2001, and then it became possible to have dual citizenship.

The Swedish Citizenship Act of 2001 differs in several respects from previous laws such as the citizenship laws of 1894, 1924 and 1950. The law of 2001 has opened up the door for some *ius solis* considerations with the purpose to avoid statelessness even though the *ius sanguinis* principle is still operating in a striking way. According to the current legislation a child acquires Swedish citizenship by birth under condition that the mother is a Swedish citizen and the child can also get citizenship by birth if the child was born in Sweden and if the father is a Swedish citizen. However, in the previous mentioned citizenship laws the principle of *ius sanguinis* was the main, overriding principle. The Citizenship Act of 2001 also accepts dual nationality which was previously not allowed and the act has also strengthened the importance of the principle of domicile and the will to engage and identify oneself with the new country. (Lokrantz Bernitz 2010, Sandesjö & Björk 2009)

The content of the requirements for gaining citizenship in the Citizenship Act of 2001 is rather "thin" compared to several other countries in Europe, (and other countries in the world). There is no language requirement in the Swedish citizenship law and the new citizens do not need to express an oath of loyalty to the country. Different political debates during the last decade have shown how controversial the language requirement is. According to some critics it has often been interpreted as a strategy of

“blaming the victim” in cases where the authorities have not provided enough educational support or – as an unnecessary requirement - given the plausible assumption that it is in the interest of long term residents to master the language of the majority population (Roth 2005); however, a “good conduct” requirement has been more emphasized in recent years which imply that persons who have committed crimes have to wait longer until they gain citizenship status (Lokrantz Bernitz 2010, Bengtsson, Strömblad & Bay 2010). The rights that are exclusive for citizens - compared to more or less permanent residents - are also few, as for example the right to vote in elections for Parliament, the prohibition against deportation and the status of being eligible for important public offices.

The introduction of the Citizenship Act of 2001 could be seen in the light of an increased internationalization of the Swedish society. As was mentioned before, Sweden became a member of the EU in 1995 which opened up the doors for more migrants from EU countries. The increased migration from various countries around the world also meant that more “multinational” marriages evolved. Before the new act on citizenship was introduced Sweden ratified the European Convention of Nationality from 1997. This convention, which has been ratified by 12 countries in Europe, has as one of its main purposes to make it easier to gain dual citizenship and introduce “good practice” in the field of citizenship law such as more reliability, “neutrality” and inclusiveness. The convention is open not just for members of the European Council but also for other countries - including Non-European states. However, in the Swedish case members of the neighbouring Nordic countries still receive a so- called preferential treatment, concerning principles of naturalisation and the conditions for acquiring citizenship through notifications.

Another important legal achievement of Swedish immigrant policy has been the granting to foreign citizens of the right to vote in local elections, which first was exercised in the local elections of 1976. The voting rights amendment to the Swedish constitution was also considered as a way means of giving immigrants access to the advantages of the welfare state, and at the same time safeguarding their right to autonomous cultural development (Ålund & Schierup 1991). All in all, it could be said that the policy of multiculturalism provided a legal and moral foundation to support “freedom of choice”, to encourage “partnership”, to give “equality” a social basis, and to prevent ethnic conflicts and the development of a segregated society. A political consensus was instituted, which embraced government and state institutions, as well as political parties (across the traditional left-right spectrum) and important social movements.

The policies of Swedish multiculturalism - and the concomitant legislation - of 1975 were characterized by an endeavor for recognition of minority rights, but it could also be defined as an extrapolation of the Swedish welfare model. It was held that the goal of equality should be enlarged with the goal of “freedom of choice”, by assuring the members of ethnic and linguistic minorities a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. In so far, the reformist socialist ideas of the Social democracy underpinned this policy, with its emphasis on equality. But the policy was also influenced by a liberal, individualistic political philosophy, with its focus on individuals and individual rights and skepticism towards group-orientated rights, such as collective self-determination, land-rights and cultural autonomy. As an example of this particular skepticism, we find the long-time prohibition of butchery in line with Halal and Kosher rules. The regulation on animal husbandry has always been overridden the freedom of religion in this particular issue (Blanck & Tydén 1995). More generally, the Swedish legal system has shown very limited interest in and acceptance of the idea that ethnic belonging and cultural traits could be recognized as a reason for differential legal treatment (Nygren 1999).

Thus, it might be said that the policy of 1975 suffered from compartmentalization: calls for recognition of collective, cultural practices was mixed together with a classical, liberal emphasis of individual rights. Consequently, it did not take long until the multicultural policy was heavily criticized. For instance, some scholars claimed that the policy as designed from the vantage point of an *aesthetic* and narrow conception of culture (e.g. Rojas 1993 & Roth 1996; cf. Hertzberg 2003). The expressions promoted under the heading of “freedom of choice” were besides the publication of exile newspapers, magazines or journals, mainly folkloristic in character: literature, poetry, dances and music.

Consequently, the prospect of possible conflicts between values, norms and ways of living were seldom addressed especially concerning family matters. Although these issues have been discussed in the state sponsored research commission mentioned above, the development of a praxis during the late 1970s and early 1980s following the guidelines inherent in multicultural policy reveals that the full complexity of the cultures implied in the notion multiculturalism was slightly underestimated.

But a change was about to come. Subsequently, the authorities recognized that the multiculturalism developed in practice was limited in scope. During the 1980s, a number of governmental white papers pointed to the need of recognizing the width of promises inherent in liberal, multicultural political philosophy. Moreover, they also highlighted a perceived risk of “cultural clashes” between norms and considered to be “typically” Swedish such as the ideal of gender equality and those held to be alien and external to Swedish society. Less than a decade after its implementation, a discourse was articulated which stressed the limits to multiculturalism; the relatively progressive articulation of multicultural policy was circumscribed by a perceived need to clarify what was inherently Swedish culture, and a need to clarify which norms and values that are unconditional to the Swedish society (and thus mandatory for migrants to conform to). Hence, the scope of what was tolerated and recognized was diminished. Still, one central mechanism for fulfilling the multiculturalistic goal of recognition was by and large left intact. The minority organizations still had the possibility to receive economic support for activities that strengthened their culture and ethnic identity (Ålund & Schierup 1991).

It might be said that the wish to narrow the scope of multiculturalism followed a changing pattern in migration. As stated earlier, the migration changed quite dramatically in the early 1970’ies, when labour migration halted and gradually was replaced by refugee migration. From now on, the majority of the migrants came from countries outside Europe (in Latin America, the Middle East or Africa). Earlier on, during the 1960’ies, it was claimed in governmental white papers that migration from so-called “culturally distant” countries necessitated a stronger emphasis on what was perceived as inevitable and unconditional in Swedish society (Hertzberg 2003), in order to avoid “adaption problems”. Whether this call for making the “unconditionally Swedish” explicit during the 1980’ies was caused by concerns for - or fears of? - the “culturally distant” or not hasn’t really been examined, though.

We witnessed a distinctive shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy during the mid-1990’s. In 1995, the multicultural policy based on equality, freedom of choice and partnership was replaced with a new policy, with a focus on integration. The issue of inclusion of migrants into society was by and large transformed to a matter of inclusion of migrants into *the labour market*, and integrations policy consisted mainly of measures promoting employability (still, it must also be stressed that the legal rights of the minorities were left unchanged). From the vantage point of labour market conditions, the new policy puts its emphasis on the responsibilities and rights of the *individual* - not his or her affiliations. Thereafter, the political rhetoric in Sweden’s integration and minority politics often contains the words “same rights and responsibilities” and “same possibilities” (Roth 2006), although the focus in public debate was firmly put on migrant *responsibilities*, not minority *rights*. But the rights of the migrants were not altogether forgotten, we also witnessed an increased attention to ethnic discrimination, and the non-discriminatory laws were strengthened. But the ideal of a multicultural Sweden as well as the recognition of cultural differences was more and more downgraded. When affirmative action or special rights for minorities were accepted, they were only seen as something that could be employed temporarily, as a way of solving problems for relatively newly arrived immigrant groups.

Some other important changes during the 1990’s in the discourse on multiculturalism and tolerance could be noted. It became more and more usual that advocates of multiculturalism – or similar political ideas – tended to support *the value* of a multiethnic or multicultural society. The notion of “mångfald” (diversity) became a catch-word in policy and public debate, focussing on economical values and other positive effects, but not so much on the moral virtues of tolerance and respect (de los Reyes 2001). Thus, the language of economics gained priority over the language of ethics and human rights in many

debates on migration and the multiethnic condition, especially in the field of “integrationspolitik” - i.e. policies aimed at integrating migrants in different spheres in Swedish society (Hertzberg 2003).

All the same, the attempts to delineate the basic norms of Swedish society has since the late 1980'ies been a central issue in the public policies on integration, tolerance and recognition (Hertzberg 2003). For instance, when a new educational policy for primary and secondary education, Lpo 94 and Lpf 94, was developed during the mid 1990s, it was clearly stated that education in Swedish schools should be firmly based on a set of values considered to be Swedish, and also derived from a Western and Christian tradition. This statement was especially expressed by the Christian democrats (KD) in the right wing government in the beginning of the 1990s.

Another discussion has evolved during the last decade on the pros and cons of private faith schools, where especially leading members of the Social Democratic party has been critical of their presence from the perspective of social and cultural integration (Roth 2006). However, several parties in parliament have been more inclined to show tolerance instead of non-tolerance as Sweden has ratified well known human rights conventions such as the European Convention that open up the door for these kinds of schools. The establishment of private faith schools followed the “free-school” reform in Sweden in 1992, when private actors was allowed to arrange education, but has by many been seen as an unintended consequence of an reform which first and foremost was intended to open up for new educational philosophies, freedom of choice and/or parental-run cooperative schools. Still, the lack of conclusive empirical evidence concerning their social and educational effects has also encouraged an attitude of tolerance instead of a full blown rejection or a positive endorsement or respect.

“The veil debate” has also figured in public debate, even though the use of the burqa and the niqab has not been frequent, and the Liberal party used it as a symbol issue in the election to parliament 2010. Religious customs such as the headscarf have received mixed emotions and the overall stance could probably be described as tolerance (in comparison to the burqa or the niqab which have attracted a more negative stance such as non-tolerance). For instance, in 2003, The National Agency of Education allowed for a prohibition of niqab and burqa, on the basis of educational concerns. However, the juridical legitimacy of this prohibition has been questioned, with reference to the law against discrimination, and no verdict – and precedent - has yet been recorded.

Many political commentators from different political quarters have - in the light of the dramatic examples mentioned above – been eager to draw lines between norms that could be seen as central in public and private lives (not at least for sustaining a common social identity) and norms that could be more negotiable and flexible. The candidates for the first kind of norms have often been - as was mentioned before - principles in criminal law and well known basic norms in human rights instruments such as the right to life, physical integrity, anti-discrimination principles, the protection of the basic interests of the child (“the best for the child”) and freedom of expression (Roth 2005).

This shift has taken place in a more explicit way during the period of the Social democratic government in the beginning of the 21st century and it has been even more emphasized during the present right wing government (2010). From the current right wing government's perspective - and from the perspective of the previous Social Democratic government - there has not occurred any inclination to delineate any special ethnic groups as groups in need of special protection or assistance. A general anti-discrimination policy has prevailed where all groups in society should receive the same kind of assistance in terms of equal rights and responsibilities. The governments have left the job to give more specific assistance to the local municipalities as the problems for various ethnic or national groups may differ depending upon the specific context.

In Sweden as elsewhere, the significant gulf between theory and practice haunts the political philosophy of multiculturalism. A number of studies (for a summary, see Hertzberg 2006) of the policy developed in the practice of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky 1980) clearly show a tendency to assimilatory ambitions. Although a considerable number of those studies are conducted with qualitative methods, in a fashion that makes the overall reliability hard to measure, it must be said the

prevalence of this tendency seems hard to deny. Partly counter to the relativistic or the pluralist core of the multiculturalism and the diversity oratory, the practitioners of the welfare state repeatedly express – in discourse as well as in practice – a plea for conformity to perceived Swedish norms and standards. Hence, there is an attitude of non-tolerance vis-à-vis the norms and customs of minority groups that are perceived to be not in tune with the norms of the majority culture.

At least in the cases where they are described as alien with respect to the Swedish legal system and prevailing (official) norms in family life such as gender equity and children's rights. The cultures and of non-Swedish groups is – together with the socioeconomic segregation – are understood as a key factor explaining unemployment and social problems among migrants (Hertzberg 2003). Conformity to the Swedish ways of acting and thinking are held to be a necessary – if not sufficient – condition for inclusion to the labour market and other central social arenas. What is striking in the context is the fact that these so-called Swedish norms and customs more and more are phrased with the help of a more universal human rights vocabulary such as gender equity and respect for non-discrimination and democracy (Roth 2010).

When it comes to positive acceptance or respect it may be true that prevailing attitudes in Swedish society could be described through the well-known concept of “boutique multiculturalism” as the concept has been used by the American scholar Stanley Fish (1997). The customs, norms or rituals that are endorsed in a more full-fledged sense of the term concern phenomenon such as music, cuisine and art. This fact also highlights the critical question concerning the thick cultural “character” of the Swedish majority institutions and the welfare traditions that were developed during the 20th century – especially during the post war period.

1.4. Concluding remarks

The Swedish state formation is relatively old. For a large portion of its history as a political entity, Sweden has exemplified cultural diversity in different senses - in terms of cultural contacts as well as population structure. Cultural exchanges with other countries have always taken place, and members of ethnic groups from other countries have been a constant presence, even though the numbers compared to the period after 1945 have been comparatively speaking rather small. From the period of the establishment of the centralized Swedish state and until the 19th century, a “nationalism” with a sharp focus upon religion dominated the public discourse, a nationalism which allowed for a rather generous form of cultural diversity as long as the people expressed their belonging to the Lutheran church.

After the second world war the official form of nationalism and social belonging changed to more cultural forms of nationalism that were seen as more acceptable in the light of world politics. The post war period of Sweden has been dominated by a cultural-ethnic nationalism in spite of an official multicultural ideology – especially during the two last decades of the 20th century. In this national narrative the concept of the welfare state and its assumed Swedish expression (“*folkhemmet*”) has played an important role. During the first decades following the second world war, the policies towards different immigrant and minority groups were in general purely assimilatory and the tolerance or respect for various cultural identities and customs were not very widespread. In addition, there was no systematic reception policy. For example, there was no planned reception policy when the Jewish and Estonian refugees arrived in Sweden after the end of the war.

In the middle of the 1970's, multiculturalism became an important element in the Swedish model of welfare-state politics. It established the principles that have guided Sweden's immigration policy ever since: equality, freedom of choice and partnership. It states *equality of opportunity* in all fields of social and economic life, *freedom of choice* as to the cultural identity the immigrant wants to assume, and *partnership* between immigrants, their associations and the larger society. The proclaimed egalitarian and multicultural ideology has legal backing. In most important matters, formal equality

before the law holds true, as for example equal access to unemployment contributions and a large number of other social welfare benefits.

During the mid-1990's, we witnessed a shift in Swedish multiculturalism policy. Thereafter, the political rhetoric in Sweden's integration and minority politics often contains the words "same rights and responsibilities" and "same possibilities". The ideal of a multicultural Sweden was more and more downgraded and the emphasis was instead placed upon notions such as same rights and responsibilities and non-discrimination. If affirmative action or special rights for minorities were accepted it was only seen as a limited policy in the initial phases for the immigrant groups. This shift has taken place in a more explicit way during the period of the Social democratic government in the beginning of the 21st century and it has been even more emphasized during the present right wing government (2010).

During the last three decades, one central challenge regarding cultural diversity has been the gap between theory and practice in the multicultural policies. This also applies to Sweden's ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The gap could be seen as practical in the sense that the authorities have not been engaged in any substantial measures in, for example, the field of education. Critics of the official guidelines both in political and academic circles have been eager to emphasize that the traditional assimilation model, which characterized Swedish policy for several decades in the post war period is – on the whole - far from dead, and that the cultural diversity which has been endorsed officially has been rather limited in nature.

According to some analysts, Sweden has also problems of discrimination both with respect to the labor market and with respect to the provision of various important goods and services such as housing and educational opportunities. These problems have often gone hand in hand. For example, the Romani people have faced both cultural and economic discrimination. In the case of the organized members of the indigenous population - the Saamis - one of their central ways of living - the reindeer enterprise - also clashes with the economic activities of the majority population in Northern Sweden, and the property rights institution of the modern market economy.

The critical question concerning how tolerance (and recognition) as a norm, public policy and everyday practice is conceived in Sweden needs to be formulated in more concrete terms, i.e., from the perspective of whom and concerning which groups or individuals, in what areas. As an introductory remark, it is worth mentioning that public policy in Sweden – during the post-war era - has been focused on the individual member of various groups, mainly focussing on individual rather than collective rights. As stated above, Sweden refusal to ratify the ILO convention on land rights for indigenous people could be seen as an illustrative example of this stance.

As a concept in official discourse, tolerance is - for example - among the core values in the national curriculum of 1994 for primary and secondary education (a curriculum that will be changed in the year of 2011). In addition to values such as democracy, generosity, gender equity tolerance is here seen as a cornerstone in the civic education of the public school system. However, it is fair to say that the concept of tolerance has not received so much public attention and endorsement in the general public debate in recent years (Roth 2010). Concept such as acceptance and respect are seen as more in tune with ideas of multiculturalism and integration as they mainly have been expressed by left-wing parties in parliament (Roth 1999).

Advocates of a multicultural society often express that multiculturalism in various forms are seen as a positive asset for all citizens – and – integration is also seen as a two way process which also include the majority population. During the last 15 years, though, advocates of multiculturalism – or similar political ideas – ha tended to advocate *the value* of a multiethnic or multicultural society. The notion of "mångfald" (diversity) has, to a considerably larger extent been a catch-word in policy and public debate, thereby rather focussing on economical values and other positive effects, but not so much on the moral virtues of tolerance and respect. The language of economics has gained priority over the

language of ethics and human rights in many debates on migration and the multiethnic condition, especially in policies aimed at integrating migrants in different spheres in Swedish society.²

From the perspective of anti-discrimination law and officially endorsed human rights principles, intolerance is shown towards cultural traits and norms that are seen as violations of basic rights such as the respect for human dignity, physical integrity and life. As was mentioned above, honour killings and violence are seen as non-tolerable practices as well as practices that violate gender equity or practices that express homophobic attitudes. In certain areas the practices and rituals may be contested in the sense that there are advocates for but also critics that completely reject the practices.

The case of halal and kosher meat is another representative example. Here one finds fierce criticism from animal rights activists as well as positive acceptance from those political circles that strive to extend the content and the scope of the principle of freedom of religion (Roth 2010). Other religious customs such as dress codes receive mixed attitudes depending upon their characteristics. Thus, the perceived intolerance of migrant groups has been as much discussed as the perceived tolerance of the majority towards the minority (if not more, from time to time). As was mentioned above the occurrences of burqa and niqab often receive heavy criticism in the public debate. Obviously, the questions of tolerance and recognition of the practices of religious and cultural minorities has changed depending upon which values are emphasized. As in the example of burqa and niqab, tolerance and recognition of claims from religious minorities – in this case, Muslims – has repeatedly been turned down in various political settings with reference to universal human rights.

Some scholars claim that the strategy of the majority to employ universal rights in order to restrict the minorities' freedom of religion, and deny the enactment of cultural practices, is a way of enforcing assimilation rather than a pluralistic integration (Billig 1992), not least when concept of human rights is couched in a nationalistic idiom. Tolerance can also be, according to Brown (Brown 2006), comprehended in terms of power and as a productive force – a force that fashions, regulates and positions subjects, citizens and states as well as one that legitimates certain kinds of action. The history of Swedish multiculturalism shows how different political traditions inevitably shape – and even obstruct – the implementation of tolerance and recognition, even when there may be benevolence behind the scheme. The complexity at hand calls for a close attention to the national as well as the local contexts, where the religious practices in question, for instance the wearing of burqa or niqab, become an issue.

² However, this conclusion might not hold, when it comes to the public discourse on national minorities, such as the Sami, the Tornedal and Swedish Finns, the Roma and the Jewish group; in this case is presumably more often focused on rights, such as those inscribed in the European Framework Convention from the European Council (Roth 2010).

CHAPTER 2: (IN)TOLERANCE AND RECOGNITION OF DIFFERENCE IN SWEDISH SCHOOLS. THE CASE OF ISLAMIC DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS AND PRACTICES OF VEILING

2.1. Introduction

The general aim of this report is to describe and analyze the embodiment of acceptance and recognition in discourses and practices which address cultural diversity in the Swedish educational system. In order to fulfil this general aim, we study how different categories of practitioners in the Swedish school system, such as teachers, headmasters and union representatives, and other stakeholders, such as civil servants, and representatives of political parties and the civil society, discuss and relate to the claims of recognition put forth by Muslim practitioners and/or policy measures designed to reach the fulfilment of those claims. Two cases are studied: the establishment of Muslim independent schools and the claims to dress veiled in public schools, put forward by Muslim youth.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, we will describe the general attitudes among teachers, headmasters and other categories of professionals with an interest in educational matters towards the existence of Islamic denominational schools and the practice of wearing Burqa and/or Niqab in public schools. Second, we will describe which arguments that are employed in the opposition of those phenomena, and implicitly or explicitly argue for the closing-down of those schools or a prohibition of the abovementioned veiling practices. Third, we will analyze the ideological and policy-related underpinnings of those arguments. The purpose and basic questions of this study is formulated from a perspective on social phenomena as acceptance, tolerance and recognition compiled and developed by Jan Dobbernack and Tariq Modood (2010), this focusing on whether the practices of ethnic or religious minorities are not tolerated, tolerated or recognized, thus suggesting an analytical framework consisting of the categories *non-tolerance*, *toleration* and *recognition*, *respect as equal* and *admission as normal*.

Non-toleration occurs when “individuals, groups and practices who seek for or for whom/which claims of toleration are being made but to whom/which toleration is not granted, and the reasons are given in favour of or against toleration” (Dobbernack & Modood 2011: 31-32). Toleration, on the other hand, occurs when the opposite is the case – the groups, individuals and practices in question are tolerated, and the reasons for it are given in favour of or against toleration. The third category describes claims for recognition, respect as equal and admission as normal, i.e. when toleration is not enough, and other normative concepts such as equality, respect, recognition, accommodation, which focus on majority-minority relations and the reform of institutions and citizenship, are more relevant. Thus, in this report we study whether demands from ethnic or religious minorities (such as demands for the acceptance of the veiling practices Burqa and/or Niqab) or institutionalized arrangements (such as the possibility to establish Islamic denominational schools) are met by non-toleration, toleration or recognition, respect as equal and admission as normal.

It has been claimed that the category of tolerance contains an element of disapproval and objection (Brown 2006) that, though balanced out and overridden by reasons for forbearance and acceptance, may be seen to perpetuate a condescension, smear or denigration on minority groups (cf. Dobbernack & Modood 2011). Many contemporary media debates on the multiethnic condition, in Sweden and elsewhere, are centered round an implicit binary opposition between the tolerant, Western majority, and the potentially intolerant and probably Muslim minority. From this perspective, the rhetoric of tolerance “identifies tolerance and the tolerable with the West, marking nonliberal societies and practices as candidates for an intolerant barbarism that itself is signaled by the putative intolerance ruling these societies” (Brown 2006:6). In order not to reproduce this approach, some caution is needed, and it must be noted that this report primarily approaches the notion of tolerance in an empirical, sociological way: what is tolerated, what is not tolerated, and why?

The educational system in Sweden

In Sweden, attendance at school is compulsory for all children aged 7-16, but the age when children may start school is flexible. A child can start school as a six, seven or eight-year old. Compulsory school is mandatory and free of charge. The vast majority of schools in Sweden are municipally-run, i.e. the municipality is the owner. Usually, children attend a municipal school close to their homes. However, the pupils and their parents are entitled to choose another municipal school, or a school that is run independently. The independent schools are open to all children and must have been approved by Skolverket, the Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE). Teaching in independent schools has more or less the same objectives as those of the municipal school, but can have an orientation that differs from that of the municipal schools. The definition of an independent school is that the school is run by a private actor such as a company or an association. If the school does not comply with current regulations, SNAE can withdraw its permit. In several cases, independent schools have a different orientation from municipal schools, including special teaching methods (Montessori or Waldorf), a linguistic/ethnic orientation, or a certain religious profile, even though there is a non-negligible number of schools whose orientation similar to the public schools (Skolverket 2011a).

The schooling system is decentralized; a number of general goals and guidelines are formulated on the national, central level, and then the municipalities and the local schools are given the responsibility to design and work out the activity which has to arrive at the national goals; it is a goal-based system with a high degree of local responsibility. The guidelines and the goals are expressed in a number of steering documents. The *national curriculum* (läroplanen) describes the school's basic goals and guidelines, and also its fundamental values, the so called "value-base" (värdegrund). These are common to the compulsory comprehensive school, as well as the Sami school, the compulsory school for children with learning disabilities and the school for the deaf and hearing-impaired. There is also a *national syllabus* for each individual subject, and a *national time schedule* which states the minimum guaranteed time that pupils are entitled to teacher-led instruction in the various subjects. At the municipal level, there is a municipal school plan that shows how the municipality's schools are to be organised and developed, and at the local level, we find a work plan for each school, which is an adaptation of the contents of the national curriculum, the syllabi and the school plan to the organization, work methods and local circumstances of that school (Skolverket 2011b).

All young people in Sweden who have finished compulsory school are entitled to three years of schooling at upper secondary. Upper secondary education provides a platform of knowledge for further studies and for a future career. Upper secondary education comprises the regular upper secondary school and the upper secondary for young people with learning disabilities. It offers various types of programs: first, 17 national programs, which last for three years. These are divided into mandatory courses, optional courses, individual choices core subjects and project work; then, individual programs for pupils with particular educational needs (which for example include pupils who want to do an apprenticeship), and last specially designed local programs, which combine subjects from the various national programs. Secondary education is not mandatory in a formal sense, but it is more or less regarded as mandatory, since the labour market for young persons without secondary education is virtually non-existent.

From equality to equivalence and freedom of choice

The Swedish educational system went through substantial changes during the 20th century, from the so-called "parallel school system", consisting of separate schools for the elite and the working class, to a formally integrated - still internally deeply divided - comprehensive school system (Bunar 2008). During this process, which in main was carried out by social democratic governments, education was particularly seen as one of the main instruments for achieving more social equality in a developing welfare society and in ensuring social citizenship, especially during the years of social politics

expansion in the 1950's and 60's (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2002, Richardson 2010). Through numerous reforms, social democratic governments intervened on the field of education, by changing the organizational structure of the schools. In tandem with this process, new positions and new status differences appeared within the formally integrated schools. There were no special educational institutions catering solely to the elite, but a deep gap opened between different public schools, depending on which social group - working class, immigrants, middle-class Swedes etc. - dominated the particular neighborhood and thereby the particular school (Bunar 2008).

Moreover, it can also be said that the educational system gradually was incorporated into a new ideological order; virtually every aspect of education that allegedly contributed to the reproduction of social differences and in sustaining the old social order was changed. The education reforms during the post-war period had a strong focus on *equality*, thus promoting equality of opportunity and outcome through a system which deliver education of the same quality to everyone. During the 1970's and 80's, however, the goal of equality, which was central for the above mentioned reform program, was redefined and re-articulated in terms of the goal of *equivalence*, which stipulates that the education delivered at school should be of equal value to everyone. According to the researchers Bo Lindensjö and Ulf P Lundgren (2002: 86-91), there are at least two distinct causes behind this change. First, it was an attempt to avoid the radical political connotations of the term "equality". Second, it was a pragmatic adjustment to the difficulties involved in implementing equality in education; since the capacity and hence the needs of the pupils varied, the focus should be on supplying education that was of value for everyone, rather than a uniform format. Thus, it was implied that different needs has to be recognized, and that an overall homogeneity was not desirable, not even for the equality objective. Lindensjö and Lundgren (2002) also note that the goal of "equivalence" often tends to be interpreted as "to offer education in accordance with the national curricula" or "to offer instructions by qualified teachers".

Not only was diversity in needs acknowledged. Gradually, the question of parental influence over education became more important. This question rose during the 1970's, to a large extent as a reaction to the strong centralist tendencies in-built in the integrated comprehensive school project. This anti-centralist tendency grew stronger during the 1980's, when the ideological tenets of neoliberalism and the ideals set out in the new public management agenda gained ground – in education as well as other sectors of public administration and production of welfare goods (Green Pedersen 2002). Between 1992 and 1994, a number of educational reforms were carried through in Sweden, which changed the organization and production of primary (and secondary) education in a fundamental way. The municipalities gained much more influence over primary and secondary education; parents were given the right to decide which school their children should attend, and a voucher system was introduced, giving parents the right to chose between public and private (so-called independent) schools (Green Pedersen 2002, Bunar 2008).

According to educational scientist Tomas Englund (1993), a shift of perspective in educational policy took place during the 1980's and early 1990's; education became a private good, and an instrument for individual capital acquisition, rather than a public good. "Freedom of choice" became the overriding principle in many official discourses on education, and the ethos of equality lost its appeal. The social ambitions of the educational system become more diffuse during the 1990's (Blomquist & Rothstein 2000). Still, the goal of equivalence maintained its strong position (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2002), as it was compatible with the promotion of a new system of accountability and its emphasis on the evaluation of student achievements (cf. Englund 2003). In this new discursive context, the goal of "equivalence" also became a keyword in the endeavors to control the outcomes/products from public as well as private suppliers of education, assuring that the same standard of education is provided throughout the country.

The advent of the independent schools has posed a serious challenge to the basic ideological foundations of the Swedish educational system (Bunar 2008). With the principle of non-separation,

which aimed at counteracting differentiation of children into schools based on class, gender or ethnicity, education was earlier “regarded as an instrument for equalizing class differences, providing a meeting place for children with different social and cultural backgrounds and an education free of religious or commercial involvement (Bunar 2008:424). With the establishment of independent schools - adding up to 714 schools on primary level and 414 on secondary level in 2011, providing education for roughly every tenth student on primary level and every fifth student on secondary level (Friskolornas Riksförbund 2011, Skolverket 2011c) - the development is going in the opposite direction. High achievers and students of middle class background are concentrated to a limited number of schools (Bunar 2008). Moreover, about ten percent of the children in independent schools attend to a confessional independent school, i.e. 8 000 pupils at primary level and xxx on secondary.

A number of studies in different academic disciplines suggest (e.g. Arnman et al 2004, Daun 2003, cf. Bunar 2010:9), among them a number of studies from SNAE (e.g. Skolverket 1996, 2003), has pointed that the selected use of school choice has augmented not only social segregation in Sweden, but also the ethnic, particularly in relation to schools in relatively deprived areas in the suburbs of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. Still, a good-sized number of students have during the last decade left low-achieving and stigmatized suburban schools in the above mentioned cities, opting for high-status middle-class schools in areas predominantly populated by non-migrant Swedes. But recent studies also indicate that they haven’t reached any relevant “measures of integration”, such as raising their average grades or making friends with children living in the school’s attendance zone (Bunar & Kallstenius 2007, Bunar 2010). Thus, a fair number of students have used the possibilities put at disposal by the independent school reform, but it has not enhanced their social capital and thus not yet changed their social position.

Those developments suggest that the goals of equality and freedom of choice are not wholly compatible. Though, it must be noted, that after 20 years of developments in educational policy under the aegis of “freedom of choice”, even the advocates of such a policy have raised doubts over its adequacy and efficacy. In the new curricula, which is to be implemented during 2011 by the right-wing liberal government, the instruments ensuring equivalence has been reinforced.

Tolerance, recognition and education policy

In Sweden, policies towards different immigrant and minority groups during the first two decades of the post-war migration were in general assimilatory, and the tolerance for or recognition of various cultural identities and customs was by and large absent from the official political agenda and the public discussion. In addition, there was no systematic reception policy. The period of assimilationist policy was not put to an end until 1975, when multiculturalism became an important element in the Swedish model of welfare-state politics (cf. Roth & Hertzberg 2010). In Swedish multiculturalism, welfare ideology objectives focused on “equality” occupy a central position; the other main objectives were “freedom of choice” and “partnership”; thus paraphrasing the slogans of the French revolution: *liberte, egalite, et fraternite*:

The goal of equality implies the continued efforts to give immigrants the same living standard as the rest of the population. The goal of freedom of choice implies that public initiatives are to be taken to assure members of ethnic and linguistic minorities domiciled in Sweden a genuine choice between retaining and developing their cultural identity and assuming a Swedish cultural identity. The goal of partnership implies that the different immigrant and minority groups on the one hand and the native population on the other both benefit from working together (Hammar 1985: 33)

Notwithstanding the relatively far-reaching promises for the recognition of perceived alterity, and the cultural expressions of non-dominant ethnic groups, the issue of cultural diversity was not even mentioned in the national curricula, which was introduced in 1980 (Runfors 2003). Some issues relating to migration had been debated already in the 1960’s, for example the question of home

language (Borevi 2002, Hällgren et al 2006), and by the end of the decade, instructions in home language and “home culture” (Hällgren et al 2006:315) was offered to *some* minority students, as an addition to the compulsory instructions. In 1976, a large-scale reform was fully implemented, recognizing the right to instructions in non-Swedish home languages. Still, certain attention was given to the specific demands of migrant children in educational policy during the early 1970’s, mainly focusing on their possible shortcomings and learning problems, especially their shortcomings in learning Swedish (Borevi & Strömblad 2004) . As a number of authors has noted (Gruber 2001, Mulinari 2007, cf. Runfors 2003), the category of migrant children became singled out as problematic category, in need of special measures.

In line with this “problem-focused” agenda, the full implementation of the home language reform of 1976 was by and large predicated on the belief that instructions in home language were beneficial for the overall school achievement of migrant students. Learning a home language facilitated learning in Swedish as well as other school subjects. Until then (?), the reform was not primarily motivated with reference to multiculturalist objectives such as recognition or freedom of choice, but with reference to its general utility (Borevi 2002). Accordingly, political scientist Karin Borevi (2002, ch. 5) points out that the attempts to adapt the Swedish educational system to the new multi-cultural or multi-ethnic conditions during the late 1960’s, 70’s and early 80’s, and the discussions that followed during the production of public educational policy, highlights some of the ideological tensions in the Swedish model of welfare policy.

On the one hand, Borevi argues, it was considered desirable to accept and recognize the fact Swedish citizens now enjoyed membership in different ethnic communities, or *ethnos*. On the other hand, one wanted to promote integration within one single community of citizens, or *demos*; the equalizing and integrative objectives of the compulsory school project were explicit in that case. Still, Borevi concludes that “even though the tensions were clearly present in the discourse [...], they were not explicitly noticed or dealt with by the agents” (Borevi 2002:327). Although the goal of recognition – strongly heralded by the multiculturalist policy introduced in 1975 - was paid attention to, it could in practice be subordinated to the goal of social cohesion. If any possible special needs of migrant pupils were considered, it was primarily in order promote their integration into the mainstream society, and hence to promote the overall social cohesion, not to recognize their belonging to an *ethnos* external to the imagined community of the majority.

During the 1980’s, however, the idea of recognition got more influential. Instructions for a general “inter-cultural” pedagogy were introduced in official educational policy in 1983 (Hällgren et al 2006), thus “promoting an enhanced understanding of and respect for differences in cultural expressions” (Rubinstein Reich & Tallberg Broman 2000:11). The general social value of diversity in educational setting was also gradually acknowledged. It was for example acknowledged that the ethnic diversity of the classroom ought to be mirrored in the instructions, in subjects such as history or religion; whether or not the idea got carried into action or not is of course hard to tell. Following the neoliberal turn in Swedish educational policy during the late 1980’s (above), in which its equalizing objectives were subordinated to the promotion of freedom of choice, and education became a private rather than a public good, the diversity in demands on education was more and more paid attention to. It is thus signifying that the national curricula from 1994 (Lpo 94) were the first steering document in which it is clearly stated that Sweden is a multi-ethnic and multicultural society (Hällgren et al 2006). Still, as Sabine Gruber (2001) notes, the category of “migrant pupils” (sv. *invandrarelever*) continued to be depicted in policy texts as a problematic category whose problems, cultures and traditions contrasted to the modernity and rationality of Swedish pupils.

Although the multicultural condition was acknowledged in the 1994 curricula, it could arguably be said that the objective of recognizing cultural diversity was not central to it. The focus was set on equal rights and responsibilities, rather than the recognition of particularistic demands (cf. Roth & Hertzberg 2011). On the one hand, the need for anti-discriminatory measures was emphasized in the

new policy (Hällgren et al 2006), but on other the policy also contained numerous explicit calls for adherence to common and allegedly Swedish fundamental values (*värdegrund*) in education. Thus, tolerance, openness, gender equality and a democratic disposition was designed as desirable qualities and constituents of a set of Swedish fundamental values in this new national curriculum, which should constitute a foundation for the Swedish educational system. It was explicitly also noted in the new educational policy that members of other ethnic groups should adhere to those Swedish values. Paradoxically, values such as tolerance, openness and diversity was at one and the same time both acclaimed and employed as device for accentuating the distance to and inferiority of the migrant other (Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2010). Thus, in this educational policy, Swedish multiculturalism was firmly set as a national project.

The efforts to combat racism and ethnic discrimination in everyday school life were predicated on the conviction that those phenomena represented a threat and an insult to pupils of non-dominant ethnicities, and an infringement of their civic rights. As such, it could arguably be acknowledged as a manifestation of recognition. In 2002, a number of groups – Finns, Jews, Meänkieli (or Tornedalsfinnish), Roma and Sámi - achieved the status of “national minorities”, and the municipalities got responsible for ensuring that all pupils completing primary school has some basic knowledge of the national minorities’ culture, language, religion and history; moreover, they were obliged to provide instructions in mother tongue in schools for the national minorities, in accordance with the general provisions. Thus, it can be claimed that the demands of national or migrant minorities to a substantial degree are recognized, thus following the guidelines provided by multiculturalist political philosophy (although the right to instructions in home language was slightly restricted during the 1980’s, and the status of the subject changed, from compulsory subject to optional; Borevi & Strömblad 2003).

Still, this is hardly the full picture. As a general observation, it must be noted that a significant gulf between theory and practice could be discerned in the implementation of multiculturalism and anti-racism in the public sector (Hertzberg 2006). Despite the promises of recognition and the dissemination of the diversity oratory, the practitioners of the welfare state repeatedly express – in discourse as well as in practice – a plea for conformity to perceived Swedish norms and standards. Hence, there is an attitude of non-tolerance vis-à-vis the norms and customs of minority groups that are perceived to be not in tune with the basic norms of the majority culture. A number of studies suggest that this also holds true for the school system. Occurrences of discrimination and/or racism in the school system are not only a matter of bullying and slurs from other pupils, but also prejudiced and stigmatizing treatment from the school staff (e.g. Parszyk 1999, Sawyer 2006, Mulinari 2007, Lundqvist 2007); the tendency of teachers to – consciously or unconsciously - reward pupils acting in accordance with their own set of values, norms and habits, accurately described by educational sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron 1990) has probably been in function here.

Moreover, critics of the Swedish school system (Teshahoney 1997, Gruber 2001, Francia 2007) has pointed to the existence of homogenizing forces in educational policy as well as practice, in which perspectives on upbringing, education and traditions of the migrant other has been depreciated, neglected and considered to be deviant. Rather than being multicultural, those critics claim that the Swedish educational system suffers under a strong monocultural tendency. This argument unfolds in two directions. Guadalupe Francia (2007) claims that the strong calls for social equality expressed in Swedish educational policy during the decades following World War II also established a strong belief in and affirmation of the educative capacities of the school. A strong norm for fostering children, informed by cutting-edge psychological and pedagogical scientific findings, was disseminated at schools and indirectly passed on to the parents. Perspectives on upbringing and learning expressed by minority groups were, according to Francia (2007:42) condemned and marginalized. Francia’s argument echoes the critique put forth by among other British sociologist Keith Pringle, who claims that Swedish welfare institutions are characterized by a “mono-cultural rigidity” (2003), which, informed by functionalism and scientism, is keen to categorize the irregular as “deviant” (cf. Hertzberg 2008).

Mekonnen Tesfahune (1997), on the other hand, connects the monoculturalist stance found in the Swedish educational system to the continued existence of a colonial and racializing frames of reference and value hierarchies. Tesfahune claims that the Swedish school system, as being a part of the “Western educational system” (Tefahune 1997:66), is central to the reproduction of racist, nationalist and sexist discourses and practices, as well as global hierarchies and injustice. In official education, a Western, male and white norm is (re)created, and Non-western, female and non-white identities are perceived and constructed as deviant. Phenomena such as enlightenment, progress, civilization and liberalism are depicted as a part of a singular and exclusively Western tradition, to which education is instrumental and fundamental. Moreover, the industrialized and liberal West is constituted as the legitimate center of the world. Evidently, rather than focusing on the specifics of Swedish educational policy, and following writers such as Franz Fanon (1967) and Edward Said (1978), Tesfahune points out the significance of patterns of thought and representation which are persistent across several European and North American countries.

The symbolic order or mode of discourse depicted by Francia (2007) and Tesfahune (1997) respectively might, in line with the theory of structuration put forth by Anthony Giddens (1984:31), be described as a “structure of signification”. This structure makes certain social actions possible and other hard to perform. Acting out in line with the norms and standards set out by minority cultures is probably quite often to be found in the latter case, as being depreciated and devalued by formal and informal majority institutions. Whether the discourses described by Francia and Tesfahune are employed consciously or not, they will very likely obstruct the implementation of the multiculturalist goals expressed in notions such as “tolerance” or “recognition”.

Islamic independent schools and the issue of complete veiling in school

The paragraphs above claims to represent the development in Swedish educational policy during the last decades, in general as well as with special regard to questions of recognition; still, it is a mere outline of a discourses and processes much more complex than indicated above. Nevertheless, our purpose is to highlight some of the contradictions and conceptual tensions which surface, when multi-ethnic conditions and the imperatives of multiculturalism, such as tolerance and recognition, has to be considered in educational policy. In the following study, we will examine how those imperatives are dealt with in two particular cases, and how they are related to the tricky educational policy questions encapsulated in the conceptual oppositions of “equivalence” and “freedom of choice”, “demos” and “ethnos”, and also “monoculturalism” and “multiculturalism”, respectively.

To put it more exact: we will study how different categories of practitioners in the Swedish school system, such as teachers, headmasters and union representatives, and other stakeholders, such as civil servants, and representatives of political parties and the civil society, discuss and relate to the claims of recognition put forth by Muslim practitioners and/or policy measures designed to reach the fulfilment of those claims. Two cases are studied: the establishment of Muslim independent schools and the claims to dress veiled in public schools, put forth by Muslim youth.

The cases are selected with consideration to a number of circumstances. First, the faith and belief practices of Muslim migrants have been debated on a large scale in Swedish media during the last decade, as in many other West European and North American countries. It is quite common that these practices has been put under scrutiny, and subjected to extensive critique (Malm 2009, ch. 2, Gardell 2010). In populist or radical right-wing quarters, it is said that the enactment of Muslim belief practices is a part of a slow but threatening “islamization” of Sweden (Malm 2009). Given the fact that Sweden traditionally has been characterized by a majority religion (i.e. Lutheran Christianity which also formed the base for a state church until the year of 2000), the space for religious diversity and tolerance has been rather limited in Sweden (see below and Roth & Hertzberg 2010).

The attention paid to Muslim belief practices and institutions has also involved Muslim denominational schools and the practice of wearing Burqa and Niqab, and, more generally, other forms of veiling. The establishment of denominational schools during the last two decades, whether

Islamic or not, has also received a lot of attention, in mainstream media as well as in debates on education policy. For instance, a number of political parties – and not only radical right-wing parties – have voiced demands to keep down the number of Islamic denominational schools. The practice of more or less “complete” veiling, as described with the notions of “Burqa” or “Niqab” has also reached a lot of attention in public debate, not least since a young woman dressed in Burqa filed a complaint to the national ombudsman against discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, DO) in 2009, in which she claimed that she was subjected to discrimination on religious grounds at her school, when she dressed in a Burqa. Again, several political parties – once again, not only radical right-wing parties – put the questioning at the centre of the political debate, when they recommended a ban on complete veiling at public schools.

Second, Muslim migrants have, according to a number of studies, been subjected to direct and indirect discrimination. Whether this discrimination primarily is religious to its nature, or ethnic, and hence targeting their ethnic identity, is not always concluded, but the extensive negative attention mentioned above suggests that the scope of religiously motivated discrimination is either predominant or on the rise (Sander 2004, Gardell 2010). The enactment of Muslim belief practices is not infrequently obstructed. For example, the construction of Mosques does seldom take place in silence; frequent and high-pitched voices of rejection and disapproval are common, and when the buildings once are completed, the congregations receive numerous threats and insults (Gardell 2010). The opposition is evident (Integrationsverket 2005, 2006), and two mosques have been burned down. Moreover, women wearing burqa or niqab report being harassed in public (Berge & Manga 2006, Gardell 2010). Apart from the lack of recognition and acceptance in religious matters, the prevalence of discriminatory mechanisms might also obstruct the access to welfare services and the entry to the labour market. Third, the general policy discussions that have emerged in relation to those phenomena are obviously also connected to the policy questions outlined above; those connections will be elucidated in the introduction to each case, in the following sections.

Apart from that, some general observations on the nature of the selected cases might be explicated. The gradual establishment of Islamic denominational schools obviously concerns the structure of the education system; by and large, it became possible through the introduction of a voucher system and the so-called independent schools in 1992. This reform constitutes a sharp break with the earlier educational policy regime in Sweden. Thus, the reform was not primarily a measure promoting the recognition of religious minorities, but rather a change of government in education, in line with the neo-liberal agenda of “New public management”. Being so, it is not infrequent that the establishments at stake are regarded as an “unforeseen consequence” of this neo-liberal turn in educational policy (cf. Roth 1999, Bunar 2008). Islamic organizations were not a leading actor in this policy change; rather, they made use of a new opportunity structure which emerged through the implementation of a new education regime. In general, it might nevertheless be said that the possibility for a religious minority to arrange and offer primary and secondary education in denominational schools might be considered as a fulfilment of the objective of recognition, which is a constituent of multiculturalist policy.

In the second case, concerning the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab in public schools, the initiative is coming from young practicing Muslims. It is a rather spontaneous phenomenon, not directly supported by any of the larger Muslim organizations in Sweden. As such, it is a matter of how young female Muslims wish to present themselves in the social context at school. In terms of morals, it could be said that the claim to wear a headscarf in public school is a claim for toleration; the agents do not necessarily seek approval of or support for their dress-code; rather, they just want to dress in line with their conviction and/or faith (cf. Dobbernack & Moodod 2011).

Methodological considerations

This report consists of two cases studies, which relies solely on qualitative data. The main part of the empirical material consists of interviews with 22 persons – nine teacher students, three teachers, three headmasters, two union representatives, two civil servants, one jurist, one imam and one representative of a political party. The interviews are used as a source for both cases. As additions to interviews, we have collected newspaper articles, memos from public authorities, bills introduced to the parliament, debates on commentary fields in web-edition of newspapers, et cetera. Being a small study, it is necessary to make some reservations concerning the reliability of our material. Thus, it is difficult to determine whether or not it is possible to make generalizations from our material, thus asserting that the viewpoints found in our material are overlapping with or similar to the attitudes of other teachers, headmasters et cetera. Still, as it is a qualitative study, it does not aim for representativeness and reliability, but at describing an instance of the meaning production on Islam, religion and the politics of recognition at Swedish schools.

Let us briefly introduce our interviewees. *Peter* is in his early fifties and a teacher in Swedish and English at a upper secondary school in northern Stockholm, in a school where the percentage of students of migrant background are close to the national average. *Martin* is a teacher in history and geography at another upper secondary school, also located in the northern Stockholm area. He is in the early thirties and works at schools where the percentage of migrant students is close to hundred percent. The third teacher is named *Ann*; she is in her late forties and works in a primary school in area neighboring Martins, and her subjects are maths and natural science. *John* is in his late forties and a headmaster at a primary school in southern Stockholm, in a school with an “average” level of pupils with foreign background, although he until recently worked as a headmaster in the same area as Martin for twenty years. *Lena*’s personal and professional overlap with John’s; her school is located close to his, and she used to work in the same area as him (and Martin), although her experience as a headmaster are slightly shorter. *Alice*, *Amy*, *Elias*, *Gertrud*, *Katarina*, *Linn*, *Lizette*, *Noomi* and *Marit* are students at the teacher education at Stockholm University. *Alice* and *Katarina* are in their late thirties; *Amy*, *Gertrud* and *Noomi* are in their early twenties, and *Elias*, *Linn*, *Lizette* and *Marit* are in their late twenties. *Linn* is of Finnish decent.

David is a higher representative at the National Unions of Teachers (Lärarnas Riksförbund). He is in his early fifties, and also a teacher on leave. *Sarah* is in her early sixties and an employed senior official at the Swedish Teachers Union (Läraryrket). *Mehdi* is a headmaster at an Islamic denominational school located close to the area where Ann’s school is located. He is in his late fifties; of Tunisian decent but has been working as an executive in the Swedish trade and industry for over twenty years. *Mahmud* is one of the Imams at the main mosque in Stockholm, and a representative of one of central Swedish Muslim organizations. He is also of Tunisian decent, but has been working in Sweden for thirty years. *Sylvia* is a senior civil servant at the municipal district committee in northern Stockholm. She is in her fifties and among other things responsible for the reception of refugees. *Ibrahim* works at the same district committee as Sylvia, he is of Turkish decent, in his early sixties, and in charge of the municipal social care. *Irene* is a jurist at one of the trade unions (and of Chilean decent), but she has been appointed as an expert at the Ombudsman on discrimination, DO. The last interviewee, *Lars*, is in his early thirties and a political advisor at the Swedish Liberal party, *Folkpartiet*.

2.2. Case Study 1: Islamic independent denominational schools

The establishment of Islamic denominational schools

As described in the introductory part of this report, the independent school system was introduced

1992, paving the way for a considerable increase of private schools in Sweden. The independent schools made it a lot easier than before to establish schools with a different orientation from the municipal schools, such as special teaching methods (Montessori or Waldorf), a linguistic/ethnic orientation, or a certain religious profile. In 1993, Sweden's first Muslim school opened in the southern city of Malmö. In 2009, the number of Islamic denominational school was nine – all of them compulsory schools. Six of the Islamic denominational schools are organized in the organization Swedish Islamic Schools (SIS, Sveriges muslimska skolor), a part of to the Swedish Islamic Federation (SIF, Islamiska förbundet i Sverige), one of the three major national Islamic organizations

in Sweden. Through its connection to SIF, SIS is also connected to Swedish Muslim Council, which is an “umbrella organization” for Islamic organizations in Sweden.

A short description about the religious content in the instructions

The 1992 amendment in the Education Act, which made it less difficult to found independent schools, could arguably be regarded as one of the major reasons that Muslims schools began to establish in the Nineties (Berglund 2009). On the other hand, there are also some “push-factors” involved. A study conducted by SNAE in 1997 derived the following reasons that certain Muslim parents send their children to Muslim schools: negatively biased and inaccurate views of Islam in municipal schools (cf. Härenstam 1993, Otterbeck 2005), disregard for common Islamic rules respecting chastity, diet, fasting, dress, prayer, and so forth, poor religious education by the standards of Islam, insufficient discipline, fear of exposure to narcotics and alcohol, and too great a diversity of immigrant groups in the neighbouring municipal schools (Skolverket 1997, cf. Berglund 2009).

The SNEA study also draw attention to the fact that a number of Muslim parents has reported difficulties in their interactions with municipal school officials and staffs – interactions which had left them feeling humiliated, alienated and shamed (Skolverket 1997). As Jenny Berglund (2007:25) notes, this expression of feelings may not be so surprising, considering the results from a study conducted by Anders Lange (2008:91), in which found that no less than 11,9 per cent of teachers are in basic agreement with the statement “Muslim immigrant parents in Sweden do not see their children’s best”, and that no less than 81 percent of the teachers state strong or moderate dislike of Muslim denominational schools (Lange 2008:53). Hence, the SNEA study suggests that Muslim parents choose to send their children to Muslim schools for purposes of security and wellbeing, not only for the purpose of religion. Studies conducted by Nihad Bunar and Jenny Kallstenius (2006, 2007) and also Jenny Berglund (2008) points in a similar direction: their choices might as well be seen as a way of avoiding (the risk of) discrimination and obtaining acceptance of difference.

It could arguably be said that the amendment in the Education Act of 1992 made it possible for religious education to find its way back to the Swedish school system. In 1969, the subject of “Christianity” was changed to “religion”. The change of name signalled a change of perspective. Until 1962, the purpose was to foster the pupils in the Christian faith; that year a school reform required the subject of Christianity to maintain a neutral profile with respect to questions of faith. From 1969, the purpose was to teach on religions and religiosity, as social and existential phenomena, in a more distanced, comparative and critical way. The change signalled the end of preaching Christianity in the Swedish school system, which from now on was held to be non-confessional. A very limited number of denominational private schools existed outside the public school system, as for example the Jewish Hillel school in Stockholm, founded in 1954 (Peste 2007), and the century-old catholic schools S:t Erik in Stockholm and Queen Astrid in Gothenburg; still, the latter did not receive any state funding. During the seventies and eighties, a few evangelistic and partly state-funded denominational schools were allowed to start.

The fact that religion and denominational educations was discarded in 1969 could be seen as the end result of a long and efficacious process of secularization. During the first decades of public education in Sweden, the Swedish protestant national church held a strong influence over all teaching activities in the country, a position once installed through the parish catechetical meeting system which was institutionalised during the 17th century, when the ability to read and the basic knowledge on Christian theology in the population was examined by local clergymen. Nevertheless, secularization of the schools occurred slowly and peacefully during the 20th century. Debates over education policy were less concerned with who should oversee and control the education system, than with whether to construct a fully democratic education system that would not separate children into different schools according to social class (Morgan 2002). Gradually, the ethos of Christianity and religiosity was

replaced by the secular ethos of equality which was central to the integrated comprehensive school system (Rothstein 1986).

With the implementation of the national curricula of 1969, it was decided that the Swedish school system should be non-confessional or non-denominational. As noted above, the instructions of the educational system should observe neutrality in relation to different religions. But in the national curricula of 1994, it was stated that this rule does not apply for the religious independent schools. In order with Sweden's Education Act, however, some general goals has to be achieved whether the schools are independent or public (Berglund 2009), such "imparting, installing and forming in pupils those fundamental values on which our society is based", which "[i]n accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism by fostering the individual a sense of justice, generosity of spirit, tolerance and responsibility". As Jenny Berglund notes, in the pursuit of the common aims, most denominational schools arrange only a small number of hours per week for the introduction of certain subjects, and in the case of Muslim schools, "this number amounts to one to three hours per week of Islamic religious education" (Berglund 2009:23). However, the local syllabi written for such subjects must still adhere to the above described "fundamental values" (Berglund 2009, cf. above). Arguably, the scope for a distinctly Islamic or Muslim curriculum is quite limited (cf. Gardell 2010).

Islamic schools in doubt

As noted above, the sudden increase of denominational schools has received a good deal of attention, in public media as well as in the debate on educational policy in Sweden, and the same goes for the establishment of Muslim denominational schools. For example, in 2003 Swedish television broadcasted documentary by the Swedish-Kurdish documentary film director and producer Evin Rubar, where Islamic denominational schools were represented in a negative way. In the film, interviews filmed with a hidden camera was shows, in which a number of headmasters at Islamic schools states that the do not want to cooperate with the social services in the municipality, use threats to force young women on the run to return to their families, and that they do not intend to follow the national curriculum. After the showing, an extensive media debate followed, in which Islamic schools frequently was depicted as a problem, and calls for ban of those schools were voiced.

Directly prompted by the media debate, the SNAE carried out inspections in seven (out of ten then existing) Islamic denominational schools (Francia 2007), and two of them did not meet the standards required for carry on teaching, and their authorization was suspended. Two other schools got an injunction; within one month, they had to make personnel (is this what you mean?) changes in their management in order to not to lose their permit. Still, the ability of Islamic denomination schools to pursue teaching was questioned in wide circles. It thus strengthened the doubts over whether Islamic faith schools managed to meet the standard of equivalence (Francia 1998, cf. Skolverket 1997). This equivalence argument is one of the arguments which have been given against Islamic schools in the public debate.

Other arguments have also been raised. For instance, it has also been claimed that religious congregations – Islamic as well as Christian -by the transcendent nature of their dogmas and preachings are prone to give their own message – and the world-views conveyed therein - priority over other systems of belief, such as other religions, and over scientific knowledge, and thus inappropriate to arrange education according to the standards of objectivity (sw. "saklighet") and comprehensibility (sw. "allsidighet") given in the national curriculum and the national syllabi (Gerle 1997, cf. Roth 2007). Related to this argument is a third one, which claims that denominational schools basic rights of the children such as freedom of thought, conscience and expressions, given the religious underpinnings of the schools (cf. Roth 2007).

A fourth argument that has been put forth is that Islamic schools bring about values and norms alien to the Swedish society, for example regarding gender roles and the nature of the relations between the sexes (Gerle 1997). This gender equality argument has been voiced by among others present minister of education, liberal MP Nyamko Sabuni, who wrote an article in the Swedish daily Expressen a couple of months before her appointment, in which she stated that denominational schools – whether Muslim, catholic/ Christian or Jewish - foster women and men to traditional gender-roles (Sabuni 2006). In the same article, Sabuni also fears that Islamic schools might develop into “a natural recruiting basis for future suicide bombers” (Sabuni 2006). Still, this fifth argument, which is stressing domestic safety, is quite seldom expressed, at least outside the realms of right-wing populist discourse.

A sixth argument, finally, claims that Islamic denominational schools augment the social and ethnic segregation of the Swedish society. Students who attend to Islamic schools do not, according to this argument, experience the full diversity of the Swedish multicultural and multiethnic society, and hence runs the risk of not fully developing the competence to understand, manage and/or esteem this diversity. Other proponents of the segregation argument emphasize their lack of experience from and knowledge on dominant Swedish norms, standards and values. Obviously, this argument touches upon the conflict between promoting ethnos or demos (cf. above); the proponents repeat the equalizing and integrative objectives of the compulsory school project, thus partly sacrificing the goal of recognition given in strong programmes of multiculturalism (Roth 2001).

Thus, it is claimed that Islamic denominational schools are divisive; they provide a restricted, non-common educational environment which separates a group of children and young people for schooling from the rest of the society (Halstead & McLaughlin 2005). Another variety of the argument of social division claims that Muslim free schools are segregating or divisive, in the sense that they separate recently arrived migrant Muslim children, and/or Muslim children whose parents belong to lower socio-economic strata, from children of more fortunate social backgrounds, thus denying them the possibility to enhance the value of their social capital. This argument is quite often employed in combination with the argument of equality, thus claiming that the allegedly poor quality of the education given at Islamic denominational schools increases the mixed ethnic and socio-economic segregation (Roth 2001).

This outline of the arguments against Islamic denominational schools are not exhaustive in a proper sense, but it could reasonably be said that it covers most of the arguments that has been expressed in popular media, and it also gives a hint of the diversity of perspectives and/or values on which the arguments are premised. It must also be said, though, that the proponents of Islamic schools have put forth a number of counter-arguments and objections in response to these arguments. For the sake of completeness, it would have made sense to describe them in this context. Still, since the purpose of this text is to describe the context in which lack of recognition or acceptance occur, and given its limited scope, the above mentioned pursue for completeness is omitted.

On the acceptance of Islamic denominational schools in Sweden

Many of the arguments against Islamic denominational schools voiced in the public debates were also expressed during the interviews for this study. But the discourse that came into being during those interviews did not only oppose the existence of those schools, it also supported it. Some voices also expressed what can be called tolerance in a literal sense – the interviewees did not really see the point with the establishment of Islamic denominational schools, but they did not oppose it or advocate a shutting-down of these schools. The distribution of standpoints will be described below.

Segregation – cultural and social

In general, one of the most common objections to the establishment of Islamic denominational schools was the argument that those schools have a number of negative effects on processes of social and/or ethnic integration. For example, Peter, one of the teachers we met during this study, claimed that those schools sets up a closed social setting, in which Muslim youth gets isolated from the surrounding society.

Peter: Muslim independent schools tend to maintain a quite closed social environment. There are a number of schools in Stockholm, and [...] personally, I think that it is counterproductive, from an educational perspective, to create an environment which shields off the mainstream Swedish society. Actually, the municipality of Stockholm, and its board of education gives away money, which ... and there a number of negative consequences related to the fact that you permit religious believers to create a closed social context, or at least a relatively closed social context. Of course, I am aware of the fact that those schools do not at all resemble any straightforward Koran schools, I have learned that from colleagues that work in those schools and they are neither migrants nor Muslim believers. But the presence of those schools creates troubles, anxieties. I do not think that the linguistic environment is different from those in the nearby municipal school, or in regular independent school, [...] but what really makes me react is the excluding tendency ... if you set up a Muslim independent school, then you are quite explicit about which student you would like to have. The number of non-Muslims in those schools is close to zero, I suppose.

Thus, Peter claims that the establishment of Islamic denominational schools has some negative effects with regards to social and ethnic segregation, is so matter that they create an closed social environment, in which central aspects of the mainstream society is screened off. The argument is obviously critical to denominational education in itself; it is premised on a negative perspective on religion: believers are, according to Peter, prone to establish closed social contexts. Islam, as other religions, is divisive in that sense. In the second part of the argument, expressed in the last three lines of the excerpt, Peter develops a “strong” critique of denominational schools. He claims that the concentration of believers to specific denominational schools is in itself is a matter of exclusion (of non-believers), and the fact that the interest for and admission to these schools are unevenly distributed is regarded as a problem. Alice, one of the students at the teacher education, developed a similar argument, based on the thesis of segregation: “*if they have their independent schools, and meet, and socialize, they become ... segregated. It doesn't matter if it is a Muslim independent school or a music school; you create your own marked off world. And their parents socialize*”.

The anti-segregation argument was further employed by the two civil servants, Sylvia and Ibrahim, which was interviewed for this study. Rather than speaking in general terms, though, they referred to the conditions in the area in which they worked, an area in the northern part of Stockholm, among other things characterized by relatively high proportions of unemployed and foreign born, but with a low level of average income.

Ibrahim: The independent school reform has, among other things, got some individuals involved in processes which do not promote their own interest. We are talking about social networks: “you are my friend, I am your friend, you are my neighbour, I am a Muslim, you are a Muslim”, and so forth. Do you understand? Unforeseen consequences have emerged.

Sylvia: Exactly. There is no longer a free choice. It is not the family who choose, and not the child. There is someone else who says “you should go to this school”. And we have some objections to that, on this specific topic, we have some objections, because it is not of your their choosing. It's like that. And maybe it is like that in other places as well, but then. Maybe, you are stronger; you can say ... you can say “no”.

Ibrahim: And then, earlier, it just to be very mixed and diverse out here, even though the members

from the majority population was quite few, but now, we see a concentration of a limited number of groups. And the possibility for our youth, for our adults, to mix up with the mainstream society, it does not longer exist.

In general, Ibrahim states that he is ambivalent in relation to Muslim independent schools. Brought up in Kemalist Turkey and its highly secularized education system, he developed a negative attitude towards denominational schools, Ibrahim explains, but quite recently, he started to develop some new standpoints. With the advent of Islamic denominational schools, he sees a possibility for Swedish Muslims; they are given a chance to “strengthen their cultural identity” and “their self-esteem”, and establish a positive perception of themselves. Then, they can “gain legitimacy” and “gain normality”. Nevertheless, his general outlook is genuinely ambivalent, considering the negative and unforeseen consequences outlined above. In the local context, the Islamic denominational school is a part of a local Muslim environment, in which the relations with members of the mainstream society are limited, and the knowledge on the mores of the mainstream society is false or skewed. Moreover, Sylvia also claims that the religious authorities in the Muslim community exert an illegitimate influence over the choosing of schools. An external force affects what is supposed to be a private family matter. Thus, Ibrahim and Sylvia raise some strong objections to the existence of Muslim independent schools, but also to the influence of religious authorities in general. They make some further elaborations:

Fredrik: So, one family out of four put their children in a Muslim independent school?

Ibrahim: Yes, that's the way it is. [...] But their picture of Stockholm, and of mainstream Swedish society, and of which we are, it is so limited, and it is build upon fantasies, rather than facts about us. Because of that, we have a responsibility to develop our citizens' picture of the Swedish society.

Sylvia: Also, that problem is made worse if you stay only in a very limited area of Stockholm, if you never go downtown, if you just stick around out here ... and if the school is located here, and the mosque, then you are stuck out here. You don't go around in the Stockholm area; you don't even have a local Stockholm identity.

Ibrahim: It is not a matter of total social isolation. They may have a job, they may be self-supporting, but their interface with the mainstream group is very limited. And there are so many myths about Swedishness that predominate, myths but not reality. Some of the positive, some negative, but in these hard times, the negative seems to predominate, and I think that this is the biggest problem for democracy, when people do not have an interface of their own, own experiences, but have to rely on myths.

Thus, the segregation argument is related to a representation of the “matters of fact” which strengthens his argument. Muslim migrant populations have a distorted picture of mainstream Swedish society, and the denominational schools are a constituent of the isolated social milieu which creates the distortion. Thus, the conditions of the Muslim population in the local community constitute, according to Sylvia and Ibrahim, a strong argument against the establishment of Muslim independent schools. Still, they do not explicitly support a closing down. Rather, their discursive strategy is to conjure up doubts over the suitability of these schools. To put in the phrasing of Clifford Geertz (1973): their representation *of* the world (how it is) is connected to a representation *for* the world (how it should be), but the nature of its implications is not clear-cut. They have a negative view of Islamic schools, but they seem to tolerate what they do not like.

In their argument, Ibrahim and Sylvia focus mainly on the cultural aspect of the segregating quality ascribed to Muslim independent schools. Ibrahim actually points out that some members of the Muslim community in his area might be adequately integrated economically, at least when it comes to their position on the labor market (“*They may have a job, they may be self-supporting*”), but still segregated culturally, in so far that their knowledge of the mainstream society is defective (“*have to rely on myths*”). Still, other interviewees did emphasize the social aspect of this divisive quality. Sarah, a senior official at the Swedish Teachers Union (STU, Lärarförbundet), was explicit in this matter. As an answer to my

question about the segregating or counter-segregating qualities of Muslim denominational schools, she made her standpoint clear.

Sarah: Straight away, my opinion is that independent schools increase segregation. So it is. There is no other answer. The SNEA has proved that, a thousand of times. But then it is a matter of ... who has the guts to stand up and say that the freedom of choice of schools should not exist? No one does that. So, you have to take the rough with the smooth, if you as a parent or a student want freedom of choice, that's my opinion. And if you do not focus at the confessional/non-confessional-dimension ... the gifted students with the powerful parents with the fat wallets choose one kind of schools, and the losers get stuck in totally different environment. Their results get worse, and the equivalence disappears. So it is.

Sarah focuses solely on the social aspect of the segregation argument. She does not consider the potentially integrative qualities of the Muslim denominational schools, and she does not mention the cultural aspect of segregation put forth by for example Peter and Ibrahim. Rather, she draws attention to a general pattern of socio-economic segregation, not caused by Muslim independent schools per se, but by the introduction of the voucher system, the freedom of choice and the establishment of independent schools, regardless of orientation. Thus, the Muslim denominational schools get inscribed in a general criticism of the changes in the educational system. In order to strengthen her argument, Sarah also refers to reports from SNEA; thus legitimating her argument with the scientific standard of those reports. This argument, premised on the assumption that social and ethnic differentiation is undesirable, seems to have an intertextual relation to the earlier paradigm in Swedish educational policy, in which the principle of non-separation was heralded and differentiation was counteracted (Bunar 2002, Dahlstedt & Hertzberg 2010).

In the excerpt above, we can also see that the argument of segregation is connected to the goal of equivalence (cf. above): since the establishment of Islamic denominational schools may increase the level of social and cultural segregation, the goal of equivalent education may be hard to attain. Then, the question of denominational schools gets framed in a new way. As noted in the first section of this report, the goal of “equivalence” has been central for the governance of compulsory schools in the Swedish educational system. Discursively, the argument of “equivalence” might be regarded as an effectual argument in discussions on the quality of instructions and its design. Anticipation of problems regarding equivalence was also an argument frequently put forth against Muslim denominational schools during out fieldwork. In the next section we will take a closer look on that argument.

Still, the examples picked out above show us the constituents of the argument of segregation, and some examples of the discursive contexts in which it arise. First of all, it is held against the establishment and/or existence of Islamic denominational schools that they increase the level of cultural segregation, in that they decreases the interface between Muslim students and the mainstream society, and hence screen off representations, norms and values from the mainstream society. As a distinctive, non-common educational environment, it is supposed to be divisive (cf. Halstead & McLaughlin 2005). Second, it is also held that they also increase the socio-economical segregation. The first argument targets Islamic faiths schools partly in its quality of being denominational (religious people are more prone to create closed social environments), partly in its quality of being Islamic (Islamic and Christian schools are frequently criticized than other denominational schools), and partly because they attracts many migrants who live in areas with a low number of native Swedes. The second argument targets Islamic schools mainly because their students mainly are recruited from relatively deprived social groups. Still, the arguments are not followed by proposals to shut down Islamic denominational schools. They have the character of objections, rather than clear-cut calls for prohibitions.

Quality, rule of law and equivalence

Apart from the risk of social and cultural segregation, objections were also made to Islamic denominational schools concerning the quality of the education they offered. The quality was questioned, and so was the ability to reach the goals put forward in the national curricula and other steering documents. As noted above, this argument was often connected to the goal of equivalence, stipulated in the steering documents. Peter was one of the interviewees who expressed doubts in this particular issue, in relation to the quality of the instructions offered.

Peter: Let me put it like this: if the systems of supervision is in function, and if the Swedish National Agency of Education, and until now Stockholm municipality ... if they can check up on whether the schools are law-abiding or not, then there should be no problems at all, but if you consider how the supervision of the independent schools has been, then ... it was like child's play. The supervision did not function during the 90's. The schools inspectorate haven't been around for such a long time; the Stockholm municipality had some inspections of their own, but that was inspections of the pedagogical content, not about obedience to the law or steering document. Without a strong school inspectorate, with a clear authorization, then you run the risk of degenerated species, the building of false front, of Potemkin villages.

Peter does not make his argument fully explicit. In a context where he talks about Islamic independent schools, and the quality of education in school after the independent school reform, he notes that “degenerated species” – i.e. particular schools – will grow up, and that Potemkin villages will be set up. Although he does not explicitly claim that Islamic schools are species of degenerated kind, or fake fronts, this remain a implicit message: if the school inspectorate had been working in the way it should have, then Islamic denominational schools would “have some problems”. Their capacity to offer education by the standards is called into question.

Some of the objections put forward by Sylvia, the senior civil servant, were similar to Peter's argument. If an independent denominational school follows the set of rules inscribed in the national curriculum, and if they provide qualitative instructions in all the mandatory subjects, then, she claims, everything is ok, she stated, “but we're not there yet”. Indirectly and by implication she claimed that Islamic independent schools do not provide the kind of education they are assumed to. Still, she was not critical to Islamic schools only; her general critical attitude also targeted Christian faith schools. And apart from Peter, she clearly stated that she was in favour of Islamic denominational schools in general, provided they managed to meet the standards specified in the steering documents, and, above all, thus reached the goal of equivalence.

The argument of quality was also put forward by David, teacher and a leading representative of the National Union of Teachers (NUT, Lärarnas Riksförbund) when he outlined the general and official stance developed in the organization. He also connected into to the question of equivalence, and hence not only the quality of the instructions, but also the question of whether denominational independent schools really offered instructions in all comprehensive subjects or not, which apparently also is a part of the equivalence problem.

David: In general, we are critical to the development of the Swedish school during the last 20 years, and the independent schools are a part of this. It is not the same set of rules for independent schools as for municipal schools, but that's on the way of being corrected now ... but we don't make any difference between Muslim independent and Christian, but there is a risk connected to the independent school system, in so matter that the overall segregation increases. And the lack of equivalence is one crucial aspect of the segregation, but there other aspects as well, for instance that you choose school in line with your religious beliefs. Still, whether you are Christian or a Muslim, you have to follow the rules. And we have been very explicit in that matter, it is of uttermost importance to follow the rules that governs the Swedish school system. And this is not always the case. And it has been shown on TV, documentaries that has exposed, Christian ... extremists, one might say ... Christian independent schools, and recently it has been exposed that there also exist Muslim independent schools in which you do not follow the rules. [...] We have taken a stand; the same rules should apply for municipal schools as well as for independent. And we think it is great that the School Inspectorate should inspect even more, in order to check the

observance of the rules. There has been too much of ... lack of observance, we must say. There are examples of schools that do not care about the goals set up in the national syllabus, or in the national curricula. You don't have teachings in sexuality and life together, or whatever that is censored. For us, it is a matter of lacking equivalence.

David makes some efforts to point out the general critique put forth by the union. It does not target Muslim denominational schools in particular, but also Christian; it does not target religious independent schools, but independent schools in general. He thus states that the establishment of independent schools in general has increased the social segregation, and that the question of equivalence is one crucial aspect of the segregation problem. With a reference to some documentary films shown on TV, he implies that religious independent schools are more prone than others to not meet the standards pointed out in the steering documents, Christian as well as Muslim. There is a general problem with lack of observance of the steering documents among denominational schools, David claims, in so much that they do not deliver all the instructions that are specified in the national syllabus; the lessons on sexuality is probably not given, he claims. Thus, it is implied that the denominational schools do not meet the requirement to deliver instructions equivalent to the national standards. But when Peter focus in the alleged lack of quality, David and Sylvia focus on the lack of observance to the national syllabus.

David clearly points out that the lack of observance is a problem in itself. Rules and steering documents must be followed, that is their *raison d'être*. Moreover, the argument of equivalence is also framed within the argument of segregation. The lack of equivalence is a problem in itself, but also because it nurtures segregation. Schools that do not provide instructions in all subjects, and in which the quality of the instructions is lacking, do not prepare the students for life after school in a proper way, and this deficiency is even more apparent since the students in Muslim independent schools often belong to socially underprivileged strata, and live in deprived and stigmatized areas. In the interview with Sarah, the senior representative of STU, the connection between observance and segregation got explicated in a manifest way, and her arguments and descriptions will be given extensive space in the next paragraph.

Quality, equivalence, freedom of religion and the rights of children

In the interview with Sarah, the central arguments against the establishment or proliferation of Islamic denominational schools was clearly expressed and connected to each other. Moreover, the arguments were also clearly connected to the development of Swedish educational policy during the last decades, but also to more universal sets of rules and norms. Because of this relatively high level of elaboration, and the connectedness to wider normative contexts, we choose to allot some more space for the discourse explicated in the interview with Sarah.

After our presentation of the research project, Sarah immediately started off recounting what is her version of the history of the Swedish independent school system, and the STU point of view in this particular issue. For a long time confessional free schools were a non-issue, they were established on larger scale and became a matter of debate only in the middle of the 1990's. The first wave of free schools that came in the beginning of the same decade were followers of those few free schools that already existed, namely those who was organized their education in line with progressive pedagogies such as Waldorf and Reggio Emilia. The second wave was the confessional schools, among them a big group of Muslim schools, but also a large number of Christian schools.

The first time the STU, Sarah's employer, acknowledged that confessional free schools has become an issue is in 1994, when the new national curricula is implemented. In there, it was stated that the independent schools could be organized as confessional, but that the publicly financed municipality schools had to be non-confessional. The national curricula for the different school forms differed in this matter, and, according to Sarah, a huge number of teachers and members of the union opposed this. They thought that all schools should be non-confessional, and Lärarförbundet made a number of

statements pointing in that direction, although they weren't too explicit about it (according to Sarah); still, their position was that the same rules should apply for the schools, regardless of ownership.

New debates followed at the turn of the century, prompted by a redraft in the laws and decrees that regulates the national school system, Sarah continues, and since then one of the key issues has been whether the regulations - and hence conditions - for the public and private schools should be identical or not. According to Sarah, the prevalence of schools not guided by a non-confessional, general national curriculum has been met by apparent disapproval, at least from several union-organized teachers. There is a strong opposition against independent schools, and against denominational schools, but not specifically against Muslim independent schools. Thus, the objections against Muslim - and other denominational - schools is based on a premise of equivalence; the Swedish school system should be comprehensive, and the education delivered within in that system, should not deviate too much from the secular norm.

So far, Sarah's call for equivalence is mainly a call for a general rule system, in which the rules apply for everyone, without deviations. But her argument also took the risk of segregation or social division into consideration. In this matter, she argued quite forcefully, which we could see above. In her answer, Sarah does not pay any attention to the potentially counter-divisive potential of Islamic denominational schools. The focus is solely on socio-economic conditions. The main effects are considered to be negative; socio-economic segregation is said to follow from the independent school system and the right to choose type of school, and the establishment of Muslim denominational schools do not change that. Moreover, it is also important to note that Sarah - like, for instance, Sylvia - do not promote the closing down of Muslim independent schools. Still, Sarah's argument reflects a pragmatic stance rather than a concern for freedom or religion; she supposes that it would be more or less impossible to withdraw the freedom of choice almost twenty years after the right first was established.

Sarah: And then there is another aspect, I can make another contribution. There is ... if you look back, I had a reason to check it out, why is confessional schools allowed in Sweden, why do they exist at all [...]. And I got the task to start digging, and I found a resolution from the UN and all sorts of things. Really, it is based on, if I got it right, and if I haven't forgot anything, it is based on the right of the parents to teach your own child. And that is some kind of protection for ... yes, minorities [...]. We ratified it in the fifties or in the sixties. [...] But here, in Sweden, we created a school where the children, well, where it is possible to choose a path different from the parents. That's why we have a subject called "religion", not Christianity. So, if you should position the STU in this debate, it could be said that we think that the child has the right to choose her or his own path, and it might very well be totally different from the parent's path. If so, you have to create a school which allows you to choose that different path. But then, it should not be possible for parents to teach their own children, of course.

Fredrik: One of the main tenets behind the comprehensive school?

Sarah: Yes, very much so. Equivalence, yes. We don't lose sight of that guiding star, which is the inviolable right of the child to choose its own path.

In this part of the interview discourse, Sarah makes a clear connection between the goal of equivalence and the - presumably universal - rights of the child. Here, the goal of equivalence is less connected to abidance by the rules, but rather a "guiding star" which directs the attention to the universal rights of the child. It is a discourse of human rights, rather than of abidance by the rules. The goal of equivalence is not justified pragmatically, but because it follows from attention paid to almost context- independent (allegedly universal) rights.

Summary

In sum, a number of disadvantages with the establishment of Islamic denominational schools are expressed. They are allegedly divisive, both culturally and socially, and the quality of their instructions is supposed to be inadequate, in relation to the standards explicated in the national curriculum and

syllabi. If the attitudes found in this study is spread all over Sweden, it could reasonable be said that Muslim schools are met by suspicion. Still, few calls for shutting down of these schools are voiced. It seems that the Muslim denominational schools are tolerated in a literal sense: it is accepted, sometimes pragmatically, but not liked. On the other hand, it could be said that the provision of a judicial and institutional space for religious minorities to establish denominational schools is part of politics of recognition; i.e. an educational policy which, under auspicious circumstances might provide the means for religious minorities to receive respect as equal and gain admission as normal.

It must also be noted that the some of the objections to the existence of denominational schools implicitly and explicitly related to some central notions in Swedish educational policy. The notion of equivalence is a keyword in this context, and signifies on the one hand a demand for abidance by the national curriculum and syllabi, and on the other its priority over freedom of choice, and also the priority of “demos” over “ethnos”. Regarding the latter, the equalizing and integrative objectives of the compulsory school project seem to be alive and kicking, and the quest for recognition of minority beliefs systems is circumscribed.

2.3. Case Study 2: Burqa and Niqab in the everyday life of schools

In many western European countries, the practice of veiling has been contested and debated for several years; and an “arena of passionate controversies about the politics of integration and religious and cultural difference” (Sauer 2009:76). For some people, the headscarf has become an icon, and a symbol representing a clash between different world-views, rather than a piece of cloth; it could be regarded as a symbol for patriarchal repression over women, a threat to the (self-proclaimed) openness of the liberal, parliamentary democracy, or as an act of resistance towards an unsympathetic secular and sometimes racist hegemony of the mainstream society. As a highly visible sign, the headscarf has also become a symbol for the religious of Islam. As such, it is related to at least three policy areas: policies of integration, the governance of religious difference, and gender equality (Sauer 2009).

As several authors (i.e. Joppke 2004, Kymlycka 2005, Vasta 2007) has pointed out, the strong reaction to the practice of veiling are parallel to the “recent retreat from multiculturalism”, a recent tendency in integration policy in many western European countries. Calls for integration have gradually become similar to calls for assimilation, and the objectives of toleration and recognition has been downgraded. Discussions of religious freedom focus on its limitations, particularly in relation to the practice of veiling. The secularization of European states went along with the privatization of religious beliefs, and some fear that the visible presence of covered Muslim women in public places might lead to a re-sacralization of the public sphere, and even threaten the fundamental secular dimension of liberal democracy (Sauer 2009).

Many European societies have regulated the wearing of headscarves in the public sphere, at schools, universities, in court rooms or public service jobs. According to Birgit Sauer (2009:77), it is possible to discern at least three different approaches to headscarves in Europe: prohibitive, soft or selective and non-restrictive approaches. In France, Turkey and some German federal states, where a *prohibitive* approach has gained ground, Muslim body covering is banned in public institutions.³ As *soft or selective* approaches, Sauer describes the prohibitive measures in Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, which bans certain kinds of covering in certain public institutions. The *non-restrictive* approach, finally, is to be found for example in Austria, where body or face coverage are not restricted at all. Moreover, Sauer also notes that there is no clear-cut connection between on the one hand different approaches to body and/or

³ It must be note, though, that the prohibition policy in Germany mostly has been directed towards teachers, in their capacity as federal state officials, while more general prohibitions is in force in France and Turkey (Joppke 2007).

face coverage, and on the other different institutional settings such as citizenship models, church-state relations, or gender regimes.

In this study, we focus specifically on the veiling practices commonly named Burqa or Niqab, not on headscarves in general. Thus, attitudes to the much more common – and often less controversial – veiling practice called hijab are not included. The major difference between Burqa and Niqab on the one hand, and Hijab on the other, is that the latter leaves the face uncovered (cf. Sauer 2009). The reason for this delimitation is empirical: during the last years, the wearing of Niqab and Burqa in particular has been intensely debated and strongly contested in Sweden, rather than headscarves in general; not the least when it comes to matters of education and the regulation of educational institutions. In so matter, the debate in Sweden differs from those in France, Germany, Belgium, etc; still, the distribution of standpoints between proponents and antagonists, and their argumentation, follows roughly the same pattern as in other the above mentioned countries.

This does not mean that the practice of Hijab is more or less uncontroversial in Sweden. For example, when two journalists dressed in Hijab was hosting the TV-show “Halal-TV” in 2008 by SVT, the national public broadcasting company, an intense debate followed, in which it became obvious that a lot of Swedes did not tolerate TV-show hosts dressed in Hijab. Since then, no show has been hosted by a women wearing headscarf in Swedish television. Nevertheless, recent debates in mass media and elsewhere have focused on Burqa and Niqab, not the least whether it should be prohibited or not to cover your face in public.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, we will describe the general attitudes among teachers, headmasters and other categories of professionals with an interest in educational matters towards the practice of wearing Burqa and/or Niqab in public schools. Second, we will describe which arguments that are employed among those who are in favor of a prohibition of the abovementioned veiling practices. Third, we will analyze the ideological and policy-related underpinnings of those arguments. As in the first study, we rely solely on qualitative data; thus, the limitations to the reliability of this study are identical to those of the first study.

The right to wear Burqa or Niqab called in question

The first nationwide mediated debate on veiling practices of Burqa and Niqab in Sweden took place in 2003 (Gardell 2010). A couple of young women dressed in Burqa showed up at Burgårdens upper secondary school in Gothenburg. The teachers and the headmaster at Burgården reacted, and the headmaster made an inquiry to the SNEA, and asked for a clarification.

“Students with ‘immigrant background’ is relatively frequent at our school, but this year we have for the first time received so called “Burqa”-students, who wears a black, covering dress with a veil, and it is only possible to see the eyes of the student – through a gauze. The staff, which accordingly is used to immigrant students, has reacted strongly to this, and experiences it as unpleasant to teach students whom they can’t identify and hardly make eye contact with. [...] I have told them that the schools demands to take off the veil during the lessons. Can I do that? Are you acquainted with similar cases, and how did one react back then?”(quoted in Hilborn 2003)

Partly through the inquiry to the SNEA, the case got nationwide attention, and an intense debate followed. Most of the contributors where severely critical to the practice of Burqa or Niqab veiling, and focused mainly to its gender dimension; it was recurrently maintained that the practice constituted a patriarchal oppression, which forced women to cover themselves and hide. Among the critical voice leading politicians of different political colour could be found, such as the then minister of integration and future party leader, social democrat Mona Sahlin, who asserted that the purpose of veiling was to

“conceal women and make them invisible” (Gardell 2010, Ch. 7).⁴ However, after some investigation, the SNEA responded the inquiry with a memo (Hilborn 2003) to all Swedish schools, in which their appointed investigator, Ingegärd Hilborn, acknowledged the headmasters’ right to prohibit Burqa on the local level, in her/his own school.

If the wearing of Burqa, according to a serious judgment, runs the risk cause disturbance, for example as quarrel between students, or if other students feel worried or unsafe, or if discussions claim of unreasonable amount of time, the school administration may, by means of the general school rules, or a decision in the concrete case, prohibit students to wear Burqa at school. [...] It might [also] be difficult for a teacher who cannot perceive the facial expression of a student to find out whether students have understood a question or a statement; in a similar way, the interaction between the students may be obstructed. That disposes the school to prohibit the wearing of Burqa at school by pedagogical reasons (Hilborn 2001:11).

The legal matter of this memo never was made clear, as it was neither a law, a decree nor a regulation, but nevertheless it seemed to have a steering influence in many schools (see below). The guiding principles were held to be in line with the Swedish constitution and the guidelines for the educational system, the European convention on human rights and the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (on the other hand, it lacked any reference to canonical pedagogical texts, although its conclusions relied heavily on some very specific assumption concerning the nature of learning processes). Referring to the interpretations of the European convention on religious freedom by Swedish professor Reinhold Fahlbeck (2002, 2004), the SNEA asserted that the negative freedom of religion (“freedom from religion”) overtrumped the positive (“freedom of religion”), and that the legal protection for positive manifestations of religion – such as the wearing of Burqa or Niqab was “moderate” in Swedish judicial praxis. Regardless of its unclear legal status, the memo from SNEA gained authority, and an (informal) policy of non-toleration was carried through in this matter.

Some years later, a new debate over Burqa and Niqab occurred in Swedish mainstream media. This time, the debate was even more intense and even more drawn-out (Gardell 2010:177). It all started in 2009, when Alia Khalifa, a 24 years old woman of Egyptian descent, reported her school, Åsö vuxengymnasium in Tensta, Stockholm, to the ombudsman against discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsmannen, DO). She claimed that she had been exposed to discrimination from her school. The acts of discrimination were related to her Islamic faith, and the belief practices entailed. Alia, a practicing Muslim, covered (and still covers) her face with a burqa, and motivated it with reference to her Islamic belief. Already after a couple of days at the upper secondary education program for childcare, Barn- och fritidsprogrammet, she was explicitly told by the members of the school staff that her veiling practice was not allowed at school.⁵ After two weeks, she was told that it was forbidden to cover ones face at the school, and that she had to choose between her ways of dressing, and to continue at the program. Faced with a threat of suspension, she decided to report her school to the DO. The school now stated that Alia could continue at the program as long as her case was handled at the ombudsman, provided she lifted the veil in front of the children at the preschool. Subsequently, they would find out whether the rules at the school were in line with Swedish law or not. Since the dissemination of SNEA’s memo in 2003, the legal situation had changed. The legislation on different forms of discrimination – ethnic as well as other forms – had been sharpened. In particular, the legal protection from discrimination in educational institutions had been strengthened in 2006.

⁴ However, the political practice of the then ruling Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet*, SAP) was not coherent in this matter. Different opinions were expressed, although the equality argument depicted above held a strong position. Nevertheless, their political agency in judicial matters seemed to point in divergent directions.

⁵ The account of the case is based on Alia’s own presentation in an in article in the Swedish daily *Expressen* (Khalifa 2009). However, it does not differ in any significant way from other accounts that I have received during the fieldwork.

As mentioned above, Alia Khalifa's report to the DO led to a reborn and intensified debate on the practice of wearing Burqa and Niqab in public places in general, and in schools in particular. Those in a responsible position for teachers education program at the University did not express any calls for prohibition, but the municipality of Stockholm, governed by a center-right coalition, wanted a ban for women in Niqab from teachers training programs (Gardell 2010). As the election of 2010 came closer, politicians started to act. In October 2009, two MP's of the agrarian Center party presented a bill for "the prohibition of Burqa and Niqab in society, in schools and workplaces" (quoted in Gardell 2010:178). In their bill, they asserted that

The face of a human being – her eyes, nose and mouth – is her interface to the world and other human beings, and imagining an open society where more and more people covers their face, for example in public spaces, at work or at school does not seem to be an option for our future. The freedom of religions is extremely important and protected by the constitution, but there are some limits to it. We think that the boundary is set by the will or imposition to conceal one's face in public spaces or at work. An open society ought to consider setting the limit, and we suggest that the government investigates this question (Danielsson & Pettersson 2009).

Moreover, they also claimed that someone has to "dare to discuss the veil as a problem", in order to the right-wing populists of Sverigedemokraterna should not be left alone with this question – thus obtain popularity and votes in the coming election. By and by, the liberal party *Folkpartiet* joined the debate, voicing a similar proposition; they put forward that it should be possible for schools administrations to prohibit complete veiling such as Burqa or Niqab at schools. "*Education is communication. Education is premised on the interaction between teachers and pupils. It must be possible to see each other's faces*", their party leader Jan Björklund (2010) asserted.

In a public debate during the same election campaign, broadcasted in public service radio, then Social democratic party leader Mona Sahlin and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, leader of liberal conservative *Moderaterna* party, had a heated discussion. Reinfeldt claimed that he "does not believe in a society where women aren't allowed to appear [in public]", and that he "doesn't want to see women in Burqa in the [Stockholm] underground", and "wants to press back those who sympathize with the covering of women", although he stressed that this was his personal opinions, and that he does not want any legislation against the practices of Burqa or Niqab (Sundén Jelmini 2010, Karlsson & Hedlund 2010). Sahlin, still critical to the practice in question, claimed that veiling is an instance of oppression against women. She also dismissed a prohibition, and criticized the French anti-veiling legislation for being stigmatizing (Karlsson & Hedlund 2010). Lars Ohly, leader of the leftist party *Vänsterpartiet*, was one of the leading politicians who distinctly opposed a prohibition (Ramqvist 2009).

Without any doubt, the practice of complete veiling was one of key debates in the 2010 election in Sweden, and it has been one of the major issues in the politics of integration during the last five years (Malm 2009; Gardell 2010). As noted above, it has been discussed both in relation to gender and education. The positions in the debate have been more or less overlapping with those in other western European countries, with the exception that it focused almost solely on the practices of Burqa and Niqab, leaving the dress-code of Hijab in the background; obviously, the covering of *faces* was one central ingredients of the debate, in 2003 as well as in 2009-2010 (cf. Hilborn 2003, Danielsson & Pettersson 2009, Björklund 2010). On the one hand, there was a claim for recognition of different veiling practices motivated by an Islamic faith, which in the main is motivated with references to the freedom of religion (Khalifa 2009, Ramqvist 2009). The support for this position was mainly to be found in the political left (cf. Ramqvist 2009, Munther 2010), but also among a quite narrow fringe of liberals (Bauhn 2010), and a small number of conservatives (Poirier Martinsson 2010).

On the other hand, the opposition against the practice of complete veiling and/or the support for different prohibitive measures was based on notions of gender equality, secular freedom from religion (cf. Gardell 2010), Swedish traditions and standards, and/or social interaction, together with pedagogical considerations. Thus, it was claimed that the practices of Burqa and Niqab constituted central elements in the repression of women in patriarchal cultures (Pekgul 2011, cf. Lorenzoni 2010); that manifest religious dressing should not be visible in public places (Azmeah Rasmussen 2009, Åkesson & Ekeröth 2010), and that veiling is alien to traditional Swedish mores (Dervishi 2009), such as a “traditionally” Swedish benevolent attitude towards gender equality (Pekgul 2011). It was also said that complete veiling obstruct social interaction at public places, workplaces (Danielsson & Pettersson 2009), and – in a general sense – in open societies (Alcala 2009), as well education process at schools (Kjöler 2009, Levander 2009, Björklund 2010). The opposition against the practices of Burqa and Niqab, and the calls for a prohibition, was voiced all over the political spectrum, from the Social Democrats to the Liberal Conservatives and Christian Democrats; needless to say, right-wing anti-migration populists such as the Sweden Democrats were among those who voiced their opposition most powerful (cf. Åkesson & Ekeröth 2010).

Apart from the debates at the internet, in media and among politicians, and intellectuals – what do we know about the general public opinion towards the practices of Burqa and Niqab? In their yearly study *Mångfaldsbarometern* (Barometer of Diversity), sociologists Orlando Mella, Irving Palm and Kristina Bromark (2011) measure the attitudes to different kinds of veiling in public places, such as schools and working places. From the 2011 survey, they conclude that the resistance in Sweden against the Burqa and the Niqab is compact but slightly lower level compared to 2010. Thus, 88.8 % and 86.2 % of the population find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab, respectively, at school or at work (Mella *et al* 2011:30), whereas 69.0 % and 64.6 %, respectively, find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab at other public places. The opposition against using Chador at school or at work is smaller, and decrease when comparing the years 2010 and 2011. The issue of using the Chador in other public places may also even less resistance. The Shayla and Hijab practices are assessed by a majority as acceptable for use in school or at work, and the acceptance is even higher in other public places.

Obviously, the covering of ones face remains a threshold, when it comes to questions of acceptance and recognition. A general attitude of non-tolerance towards complete veiling is widespread in Sweden - and it has been around for some years now, according to earlier studies of Mella and Palm (2008, 2009, 2010). It might be the case that this wide-spread non-tolerant attitude explains why the question of Burqa and Niqab at school received large-scale attention during the 2010 electoral campaign. As noted above, it was commonly argued among liberal and conservative right-wing parties that it was necessary to “dare to discuss the veil as a problem” (Danielsson & Pettersson 2009, cf. Björklund 2010), in order not to let the right-wing populists of Sverigedemokraterna be left alone with this question. Whether this claim for discursive courage should be interpreted as an ambition to extend the liberal notion of freedom from religion, or as a concession to the anti-multiculturalist project of radical right-wing populism is still under debate, and a way to increase the number of votes from xenophobic strata of the electorate, is still under debate.

Regardless of their motives, it seems like that the political agenda of the Swedish liberals and conservatives are brought closer to the radical right –wing populists’ in this matter. This signifies a change of course among mainstream Swedish political parties; since the beginning of the 90’s, the issue of migration and multiculturalism hasn’t received as much attention as in many other western European Countries during election campaigns (Dahlström & Esaiasson 2009, Rydgren 2010, for a different view, cf. Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup 2008), then signalling a dismissive approach to the endeavours of the radical right-wing populists. This could imply that the political ontology of the latter has gained further influence in Sweden. Nevertheless, if the rejection of veiling practices such as Burqa or Niqab is to be regarded as an act of non-toleration (cf. Dobbernack & Moodod 2011), then the political agenda of the Swedish (non-radical) right clearly showed some proofs of non-toleration during the 2010 electoral campaign.

However, by the end of 2010, the DO had completed their investigation, and made their verdict official. In an article in Sweden's biggest and most influential daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, head of DO Katri Linna published an article, in which she explained (her interpretation of) the legal situation. In sum, she claimed that the exclusion of a student from education because of the wearing of Niqab conflicts with the present legislation on discrimination (Linna 2010). Still, DO choose not to take the case to court, since the complainant had reached a compromise with the school. Thus, no precedent was in sight in the nearest future. Partly because of the latter, and partly because of the content of the decision, the verdict was contested, debated and criticized (Hellqvist 2010, Åkesson & Ekeröth 2010).

What is wrong with Burqa and Niqab?

As noted above, different categories of interviewees were approached during the fieldwork; teachers, headmasters, union representatives, representatives for Islamic organizations, politicians, municipality civil servants and lawyers - each one of them representing different professional perspectives on Niqab and Burqa. The significance of the practice of veiling varied, according to professional activity. Already from the outset, though, it might be said that a certain convergence in standpoints could be noted. Just a few persons expressed values or attitudes deviating from the main tendency. This study suggests that the discourse on Niqab and Burqa expressed within the realm of the Swedish educational system – at the primary and secondary levels – moulds up to a quite homogenous phenomenon. Later on, the significations and the logic of that particular discourse will be outlined.

The relevance of the media debate

The first convergence is to be found in the case that almost every interviewee working in schools call attention to the fact that they never met a student in Burqa or Niqab. For instance, Martin, a teacher at an upper secondary school, points out that he never had a pupil dressed in Burqa and Niqab; *“I have seen them in the schoolyard, in the area, but I never have had them in here”* – although Martins' school is situated in the area which has the highest proportion of migrants in the Stockholm town district, among them a large number of Somali migrants. Ann, who teaches at a primary school, but exclusively at the highest forms, notes that she never had any pupil with a Niqab or a Burqa, although she has been working in areas with a high proportion of migrants for at least a decade; *“we don't have any veiled girls except for those in Hijab, I have never experienced that”*. Lena, who has been working as headmaster in one of the most “immigrant-dense” suburbs in Stockholm for almost 15 years, said that she *“never had one single student dressed in Burqa, and only one in Niqab”*. Thus, it must already from the outset be said that the interviewees' experience of meeting young women dressed in Burqa or Niqab was strictly limited.

Moreover, a few of them also stated explicitly that the media debate exaggerated the relevance of the above mentioned veiling practices to the everyday life at school. They claimed that Burqa and Niqab is not at all common in Swedish problem, it is a social phenomenon which you rarely, if at all, meet. For example, John, who is a headmaster, notes that the public debate, according to him, is distorted.

Fredrik: But do you consider it to be an issue, does young women in Burqa or Niqab ever show up?

John: No, it is not an issue. But from what I know, nationwide, it is not an issue at all, no matter of which kind of socioeconomic area it might be ... it is a non-issue, except for in the national political debate.

Fredrik: How and when do you encounter this matter – except for when it is debated in media?

John: In media, that's where I take notice of it, it is right there it ever shows up. But it spreads out, it rubs off on ... in discussions among school administratives, maybe not at my school, but between headmasters, in different contexts ... in further education classes, in conferences, that's where it

shows up, mainly with an air of ridicule added, as a non-issue, as if it is slightly pathetic that such a media hype on a question which is non-existent.

Fredrik: So, that is the most pronounced opinion?

John: At least among those I meet. But I mostly meet Stockholm headmasters, or ... maybe not. I do meet headmasters from all parts of Sweden, but above all Stockholm headmasters - and over here, it's like that. You take notice of the media coverage, but with a scornful sneer. [...] And among those headmasters who still want to discuss it, they consequently regard it as a symbolic issue, rather than a practical problem, as is it is a matter of drawing a symbolic boundary, "you cannot go further".

John is very critical of the ways in which the veiling practices are discussed in media, in particular when it comes to its relevance for educational questions; *"it is a non-issue ... it is not an issue at all"* to which *"an air of ridicule [is] added"*. No other interviewee develops such a strong critique. Also, the opinions on whether or not it is worthwhile to actually discuss those practices at great length differed. Some of the interviewees, as Peter, upper secondary school teacher and union representative, disagree with the standpoint put forth by John; he claims that *"it was necessary to discuss"* the practice in question, since it touched upon some serious matters such as justice, power and the public presence of religion in society. Peter admits that never met a young girl completely veiled in his classroom, and that his standpoints on whether it should be prohibited or permitted to dress like that *"definitely not [comes] from personal experience"*.

Thus, the school professionals and other interviewees questioned whether the scope of the debate put at disposal in media corresponded to its importance. On the other hand, most interviewees - with very few exceptions - thought that it the practice of complete veiling *"has to be discussed"*, to put in the phrasing of Peter quoted above, and expressed a number of objections against wearing Niqab or Burqa at school. And even though some of the topics from the media debate were dismissed, could some clear and legible instances of disapproval be discerned. The dismissal of the media debate was not an expression of acceptance; rather, it was call for bringing the professional dimension to the fore. And, as we will see below, this did not always bring about an attitude of recognition or tolerance.

The problem of identification

The main arguments against the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab in the Swedish school could be summed up below three separate headings: matters of identity, communication and gender. The second was the one most forcefully spelled out. On the other hand, the question gender and equality, which was - as seen above - so frequent in the debate on the internet, was quite seldom explicated.

Objections relating to identification and communication were predominant. In addition to the arguments against complete veiling, a number of interviewees also questioned the wide applicability to the freedom of religion. They claimed that other rights had an overriding importance, and gained superiority over the claims for religious freedom.

Let me begin with a description of the first case – how issues of identity and identifications made up an argument for not permitting complete veiling in school, thus suggesting restrictions in the freedom of religion. Still, it must also be noted but some of teachers recognized possible solution to the problem of identification, thus implying the demands for confirmation of personal identity and religious freedom could be met simultaneously – is someone was prepared to cover the eventuality of costs. For instance, Martin, the upper secondary school teacher that we also quoted above, claims that there is practical dimension that has to be clarified:

Martin: The practical dimension, concerning identification – really, just who is present in the classroom? That's the big issue. [...] In general, I think, in an educational system, you must show ... who you are. You should do that. Just because we are civil servants that do the marking, marking that is irrevocable. Period! We can hardly change them ourselves.

Fredrik: It is an exercise of public authority?

Martin: Yes. And then, you want to be sure that it is the right person.

Peter, the other upper secondary school acknowledged the same problem of identification:

Peter: It would be a quite strange society, if you could just go around and ... well, if I went around town with my balaclava, which I wear when I go skating and it's freezing ... I would probably have a lot of problems, for example if I had to prove my identity. And my wife, she's a nurse, she says that there are some problems connected to it, in different situations ... and that some of those in Burqa take an advantage of it. I don't in which situations, at the driver's license test maybe, etc. So, behind the religious norm, or protected by it, you can get into some mischief. In every group, you'll find some individuals prepared to take advantage of such things. [...] And I think that most [of my colleagues] would demand the school to put the foot down. The norm system of the school demands that all students are identifiable, and possible to interpret, when it comes to the facial expressions. Ok, it is not on the societal level, to stipulate exactly how people should dress, but the school is a world in itself, where ... a certain minimum level of ... what concerns so to speak personal ... personal expression, well you know what I mean, must be guaranteed.

Lars, the political advisor at liberal Folkpartiet, expressed a similar fear:

Lars: It is also discussed, some kind of uncertainty, whether you know or not who actually is sitting in front of you, or if it is someone else who showed up, I mean, if we talk about the Burqa anyway. A lot of people think it is unpleasant with someone who hides her face. You're sitting together in a group, having a discussion, and teacher is at front, by the desk, and then, there is one person ... you do not know, does she take part in the discussion or not? Does she listen? Is she attentive?

First of all, the interviewees put forth an argument closely related to the activity of the school, and its quality of public institution: complete veiling cannot be tolerated, since the teachers must be able to identify the student. He or she must know which students are present in the classroom, or whose examination is to be marked. Even so, Martin recognizes it as an exercise of public authority. In Peter's case, the quest for identification obtains an almost profound meaning: the personal character behind or dimension of the expression must be secured. Secondly, and related to the latter, it is claimed that the specific conditions at the school make it possible to circumvent the freedom of religion. Thirdly, reference to diverse "problems" outside schools are made, and some suspicion is thrown on "some" person employing the practice concerned in order to obtain illegitimate advantages. Once again, implicating misuse and hidden mischief is employed as a discursive strategy. Lastly, we can also note that the argument of identification merges together with the argument of communication: do I know with whom I am talking? Whose knowledge is expressed in the saying?

The primarily school teacher Ann developed a similar standpoint, but she also recognized an objection to her own argument, when she was elaborating on it, in relation to the case of Alia Khalifa (cf. above).

Ann: In general, I'm not hostile to immigrants, and I think that most things are ok, I mean, I do a lot of stuff which other people think are strange, according to their culture, but then I thought, when I heard about it [the case of Alia Khalifa], if you are covered a lot, and even wear gloves, then I think, if you work with kids, who are used to it, and have known it, then it is something else, but if you never has experienced it, then it could be frightening for children. So, I was rather provoked. I was thinking about it. If she could teach in that dress, then I could teach in a Father Christmas mask ... Father Christmas at Christmas Eve; that is something positive, still it could be frightening, because you can't see the features of his face, any motion ... so, then I thought: if she could teach in one of those [Burqas], then I could teach in a Father Christmas mask. But then again, that is also interesting, ... if I had a student who covered all the way, with a Burqa, I don't think it would be a problem, because I'd get to know her, and recognize her voice. I would recognize her anyway, so ... I had some objections, thinking about doing other each other's exams, and stuff like that, with some cheating involved, but ... if it were my student, I would recognize her, I am her teacher for four years, that's a long relationship, and it wouldn't be ruined because of this. It would take some time to establish the relation, but it wouldn't be ruined.

So, although the identification argument is spelled out, a counterargument is also developed. The enduring quality of the relation between teacher and student makes it possible, according to Ann, to identify a student, although she's dressed in a Burqa. Linn, one of the students at the teacher education, developed a similar argument, although more forcefully:

Linn: Then we could go on and shut down schools for blind as well, I mean, they can't see each other, can they? I think this question is so ridiculous, and since when did we have to see each other to actually know each other? There is so many ways communicate.

Apart from the pro- and contra arguments developed in relation to the matter of identification, we could also take notice of an element of ridicule in Ann's discourse; she is comparing the veiling practice of Burqa with a Father Christmas mask, thus delegitimizing a possible claim for freedom of religion by comparing Islamic religious belief practices with highly secular traditions devoid of any transcendent dimension. Thus, the argument based on the problems of identification is repeatedly articulated in a discursive framing where the practice of complete veiling is delegitimized, through ridicule or allusions to diffuse threats. However, the argument in itself does not give rise to any clear-cut calls for prohibition. The limit to tolerance is hard to detect in this matter, as the calls for prohibition is implicated rather than explicated.

The problem of communication

The other "serious question" that came upfront seemed to be less open to negotiation and solutions, though. The most commonly voiced reason arguing against the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab in school, and thereby implying the need for a prohibition, was that complete veiling practices was supposed to constitute a serious obstacle for communication, and by reason of that making difficult or even impossible the learning processes that the teachings at school aimed at.

One of those who voiced this argument was Peter, one of the upper secondary education teachers. Taking his own professional attitude as a vantage point for the argument against Burqa and Niqab in school, he calls attention to the fact that pupils express themselves partly verbally and partly in other ways, through their facial expressions and intonation, which always try to acknowledge during teaching. Peter refers to general linguist findings, which – according to him - indicate that humans communicate in three different ways: with the content of your words, your intonation and your facial expression; and that it is fundamental to make eye contact with the pupil or the student.

Peter: My fundamental attitude, as a teacher, is that students partly express themselves verbally, but partly also ... everything possible from facial expressions and intonation and so on. Linguists talk about three different areas of communication – first, the things that you do with your voice, second, things that you do ... intonation and so on, and for me, it is obvious that you must see the eyes of the student, you must be sure of that you have a specific student in front of you, and not her sister, and right there, there's the limit, for me, in my profession. I must be able to see, to take notice of all linguistic expressions from the student I'm dealing with, otherwise, you feel a bit handicapped as a teacher, limited in you professional practice.

Fredrik: In which way

David: Well, you can't interpret the reactions of the student. I teach in Swedish and English, and when it comes to asking questions in the classroom, and keep a discussion going, it is a matter of ... respect for the students, to let them in if you think that they got something to say, and to let go, if they are under pressure. [...] And when the students interact between themselves, you know from the way they communicate non-verbally, if there is something wrong. So, professionally, it [the Burqa] is a barrier.

Moreover, the concerns of identity and communication are intertwined, according to this argument; you have to be sure of that you communicate with the student, and not her sister, Peter claims, if you can't see the face of the person that you are communicating with, you are handicapped as a teacher

and limited in your professional, educational agency. You cannot interpret the reactions of the student. Today, interaction with the student means that you have to let him or her into discussion when you apprehend that he or she has something to say, and knows what to say, and to let her or him go, when the pupil does not know what to say. The same goes for the interaction between the pupils; the communication is also reliant on non-verbal expressions. Strictly professional, the niqab and the burqa constitute a barrier for communication.

David, former teacher and union representative of higher station at the NUT (National Union of Teachers) argued along a similar line. He claimed that the issue at stake had a clear pedagogical dimension. An important part of the communication between human beings, in general as well as in school, David stated, is non-verbal communication, for example communication through reading and interpreting facial expressions and bodily movements. Thus, it might be possible read and interpret and understand the facial expressions of each other. It is an important part of human communication, David continues, which might signal something important.

David: The NUT has made a number of statements, in which we emphasized the importance of actually see the face of the students, to connect, it is important that you actually connect to the students, that you have a close relation to the student, which is rendered more difficult when the student wears a Burqa. Eller Niqab. [...] It's the communicative aspect, to faculty to communicate does not only reside in verbal and written language, but also in facial expressions and movements, there are many different aspects of communication, and a very important part, which signals a lot, is the facial expression. You really don't know how you are perceived by a person on the phone. It's a matter of restricted communication, that's why you often want a personal meeting, an exchange. Communication with facial expressions and bodily movements makes it easier to grasp what someone is actually saying. As a teacher, you do want to know whether a student really understands or not, you can hear a person say "yes", but out of the facial expression, you can tell that he or she doesn't understand at all.

Thus, according to David, the practice of Burqa and Niqab constitutes and obstacle for the enactment of teaching professions. Moreover, it is not only a personal opinion, but a standpoint expressed by the NUT in the ongoing public debate on educational policy. Until present, the NUT has not yet promoted any particular standpoint in some of the juridical matters, for example whether or not it should be possible for school administrations to issue local prohibitions on the practice of Burqa and/or Niqab – or to ban them all over. They had awaited the verdict from the DO, and when the latter decided not to take the case to court, they were quite discontented. Although the DO were clear regarding the legal status of local prohibitions, the NUT asked for a court ruling –mainly because their members requested clear and unequivocal guidelines.

Lena, one of the headmasters, claimed that the practice of Burqa “*conflicts with the basic principles of the teacher profession*”. You become a teacher “*because you have an interest for human communication*”, but since “*it is hard to communicate with someone who covers her face*”, this fundamental conflict arises. Even the interviewees working outside school stressed the importance of communication, for example the civil servants Ibrahim and Sylvia. “*The Burqa is the border line*”, Ibrahim states, “*it is too much, even for my taste, as a migrant from a Muslim country*”, and Sylvia continues, “*Yes, because everything is based on the contacts we have with each other, you ought to know with whom you are talking. But the hijab does not constitute any problem [in that sense]*”. “*It is a problem of communication*”, Lars, the political advisor at Folkpartiet claimed, “*you can't communicate as usual, face to face, facial expressions and all that*”.

Thus, the wearing of Burqa and Niqab is met with resistance in this particular matter. No other standpoint is as common in this empirical material as this one: the practice of complete veiling is regarded as not compatible with the general conditions of instruction in primary and secondary schooling. But the attitudes and demands are always phrased in the positive (“the students have to show their faces”) but almost never negatively (“Burqa and Niqab should be banned”). Moreover, in this specific matter, a number of interviewees – such as Ibrahim and Sylvia, see above - made a distinction between Burqa and Niqab on the one hand, and Hijab on the other. Since the latter did not constitute a problem of communication, it was not considered to be controversial or blameworthy; “*the*

scarf [hijab] had never been a topic of discussion”, Sarah noted in her description of the internal discussions of the STU.

The gender dimension and other less explicated arguments

Thirdly, some interviewees made some objections to the wearing of Burqa and Niqab because they considered it to be in conflict with dominant norms and values on gender equality. As noted above, this viewpoint was not expressed as often in this material as in the popular and mediated discourse on complete veiling. David, trustee at the NUT, developed a more explicit opinion on the relation between Burqa, Niqab and gender equality:

David: We always try to focus on the pupil, top the pupil at the center of attention, because the well-being of the pupil is always of most importance, and the right to education, and the right to instructions. And then you have to solve all the other issues, at the side. But it is a complication, the ... the freedom of religion, which I think that you should have, at the same time as we have a gender equality discussion in Sweden, equality between the sexes, and ... it is of uttermost importance that teachers signals the right stuff to the students. And of course, there is a complication, if we have a teachers all covered up in a Niqab, what kind of message is conveyed, about gender equality? You might think that there is a clash between two different but equally reasonable standpoints. One the one hand, our struggle in Sweden for equality between the sexes, on the other hand, our understanding of and the rights of minorities to practice their religion. And that is a very tricky question, and we had some expectations that the Ombudsman on discrimination should help us, with their investigation.

Rather than objecting to the presence of students dressed in Niqab or Burqa, David calls the veiling among teachers in question. Thus, he deviates slightly from the main themes of the Swedish debate, since it most often focus on complete veiling in schools in general, and not among teachers. Still, his objection has some bearing on the case of Alia Khalifa (cf. above), since she was a student at a teachers education program. David states that the presence of a teacher in Niqab indirectly communicates a message to the students, whose content it add odds with dominant notions of gender equality in Sweden. The constituents of the clash of values are not explicated, though. The ways in which the practice Niqab collides with the allegedly Swedish standards of quality is not spelled out at all – although gender equality is inscribed in a Swedish Self-presentation (“*our struggle in Sweden for equality between the sexes*”).

The implicit nature of David’s argument is parallel to the ways in which Peter, teachers at upper secondary level, develops his argument. He claims that the wearing of Burqa and Niqab puts “*important questions*” up front, not the least since “*it would gain a lot of attention, if a women in Burqa shows up in my classroom*”, first and foremost the question of “*the power relation between the sexes*”. In order to clarify the relation between “*important questions*” and veiling practices, Peter emphasizes that he throughout his professional action always has tried to set up a social environment in the classroom, where it is feasible for everyone to participate (“*bli delaktiga*”). Still, he does not put it explicit in which way the presence of a Burqa affects gender relations. He just notes that it probably would affect the gendered power relations in the classroom. Although only implicated by Peter, a theme frequent in the media debate is seems to take shape here: the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab is at odds with established conceptions of gender equality. But when it comes the making clear of what could possibly be right or wrong, in an elaborated, normative way, Peter takes a step back. He admits that his judgments are strictly personal, and derived from a context not related to school or teaching practices.

If not solely focusing on gender relation, we will discover a similar, implicit normative stand taken by Martin, another teacher active at the upper secondary level. He states that he’s quite often are prone to reflect on issues such as migration, traditions, and the traditions that already are present in the country, and his general attitude is that cultural diversity and mixing is a good thing, when you adapt “*the best of every culture*”. Nevertheless, he questions the general purpose of wearing a Burqa, and he regards it as a provocation. Those who wear it, and claims it is a product of their free will, does so with a purpose

wants to provoke and challenge, Martin says, they want to “*provoke and test the democracy*”. The greatest weakness of democracy, he continues, is its openness: everything is permitted, even undemocratic viewpoints. And that perspective of democracy, Martin has no problem with the phenomenon; he doesn’t bother whether people are “*strolling around naked on the town or covered by a Burqa or Niqab*”, he says.

Still, Martin is not only neutral to the practice of veiling. He also claims that the wearing of Burqa and Niqab “*send signals*”, although Martins does not clarify what kind of signals they send, he also says that the women in question makes him think of hooligans who run around the town in order to destroy, with their faces covered wearing balaclavas. “*But that’s my personal connotation*”, Martin admits, and he adds that he thinks that those who don’t want to show their face have “*mischief in their mind*”, which they are trying to hide away. It is not necessarily true, he points out, but it is nevertheless his feeling.

The discourses of above all Martin and Peter share some commonalities. As already mentioned, an implicit morality is expressed. There are no clear statements on what is good or bad, right or wrong, or normal or deviant. All the same, some rejections and dislike come to the surface. The veiling practices at stake are implicitly coupled with hooliganism, destruction, hidden mischief, provocations or even threats to democracy, and feelings of alienation. Of course, it does not make sense to claim that Martin and Peter actually *state* that women in Burqa, for example, are prone to destruction or a threat to democracy. Rather, I suggest that we may distinguish the outlines of a “semantic field”, in which there is an affinity between some of the significations. Chains of metonymic and/or synonymic relations are linked together. For example, “veiling” is related to “the hidden”, “the hidden” is related to “hidden mischief”, “hidden mischief” is related to “hooliganism” and “destruction”; moreover, “veiling” is also related to “provocations”, which also is related to “provocations against democracy”. In order to use a concept developed by the Swedish ethnologist Per-Markku Ristilampi (1994), we may discern a “dark poetry” at play here, implying there is something fishy about Burqa and Niqab.

As noted above, it may do not make sense to claim that the chains of metonymic or synonymic relations outlined above represent the values, attitudes or norms of the teachers interviewed. As an instance of a discourse analysis, the mapping out of a semantic field does not claim to represent such phenomena or entities. Rather than depicting intentions or instances of an individual agency, the analytic strategy of mapping out a semantic field intends to outline some features of the “frame of reference” that enclose the statements of the persons in the study.

Thus, objections to the practices of Burqa and Niqab premised on notions of gender equality could be found in our empirical material. Still, they were not as frequent and as explicated as in mainstream media debates. On the contrary, the arguments are quite implicit, as for example to ones quoted above. Thus the construction of a dominated Islamic, middle-eastern femininity, and a corresponding dominant, patriarchal masculinity, which is such a common motif in many Western discourses on gender relations in Islamic and/or Middle Eastern societies (Scott 2007, cf. Spivak 1988), is neither particularly frequent nor elaborated at length in this material. On the other hand, we find a discourse on veiling practices in which manifest objections aren’t spell out, but rather communicated indirectly, for example through the establishment of metonymic or synonymic chains, thus conjuring up a frame of reference in which the practice of veiling tends to be related to deprecating or negatively valued objects or phenomena.

The practice of veiling and the everyday life in schools

Obviously, practices of veiling are imbued with different meanings, not least Burqa and Niqab. For some, it signifies reverence for God (Karlsson Minganti 2007), or resistance to hegemonic secularization and/or the (racist) prejudices of the majority (Yuval-Davies 1994); for others, it signifies oppression of women, support of terrorism and/or other threats to the parliamentary democracy (cf. Scott 2007). In our empirical material, objections to the practices of Burqa or Niqab was now and then articulated within in a discourse which also contained chains of synonyms and/or metonyms which

established associative connections between the veils and hidden mischief, threats and provocations. This strategy for producing implicit meaning must not be overlooked. In a slightly more explicit way, though, Burqas and Niqabs were also discussed in relation to other phenomena which also brought the questions of religiously motivated practices in the Swedish schools system to the fore. In general terms, the practice of veiling could be interpreted as an expression of “negotiated participation”; on the one hand, it is a request to hang on to a religious culture, and on the other hand, it is an expression of a willingness to become integrated and participate on equal terms with the majority population in important spheres of society. The first part becomes a necessary condition to fulfil the second part.

As noted above, the goal of equivalence was often referred to among our interviewees, when criticizing the establishment of Muslim denominational schools. It was – in most cases implicitly, but sometimes explicitly - stated that the right to equivalent education all over Sweden was more important than the rights inherent in the freedom of religion, and that the former should gain priority over the latter, if they clashed. Moreover, the goal of equivalence was also referred to on many other occasions during the interviews, when it came to the matter of mapping out the limits of religious freedom. In this context, it became evident that the quest for equivalence relied on two legs – on the one hand emphasizing the necessity to abide by the laws and the national curriculum, on the other hand the aspiration to maximize the equality of opportunities. John, who worked as a headmaster in a primary school, was among whom those emphasized the centrality of the national curricula:

John: The content of the national curricula is clear. The school system should be non- confessional, which means that we can't take part in religious festivals, if it isn't for educational purposes. If it's for an educational purpose, then it is put in a context, it's not just because it's that time of the year, it's because you study a particular religion, the tradition of that religion, and the belief practices of that religion. So, to remove the festival of Advent, that was an easy task, it was the obvious thing to do, from the viewpoint of the national curriculum - which also is right from a pragmatic viewpoint, in that kind of area [an area with many Muslim residents]. You just remove the problem. But a quest for not taking part in instructions on religion, or, which happened me today, a request not to attend to the sex instructions, [...] that's different. That's tricky. It is considerably more difficult to act rational, because there we have a law which I, as a civil servant, am entrusted to maintain, viz. that every kid should take part, and reach the specified course objectives.

On this point, the opinions expressed reached a consensus. The centrality of the law and the national curricula was crucial. For example, Mehdi, the headmaster of the Islamic denominational primary school, explained at great length that the curriculum of his schools in every detail followed the national curriculum, and the specific Islamic content consisted of additions to the compulsory subjects. One of the reasons for emphasizing the demand to follow the national curriculum was that many teachers and headmasters acknowledged the too frequent prevalence of exceptions.

Lena, one of the other headmasters, noted for example that some religiously motivated demands had been raised from parents, above all “when it comes to modify education and instructions”, “notably when parents wants to exempt their children from instructions”, above all in three subjects: music, physical education and natural science. In general, she did not meet those demands though; she emphasized that she has a standpoint on grounds of principle: “it is a matter of equivalence and legality; all children has equal rights to education, the same syllabus, and the instructions which are inscribed in the national curriculum”. Lena’s argument is central in this matter, and illustrates a frequently expressed opinion: exempts from instructions are generally not tolerated or accepted, and the reason for this refusal is the evident deviation from the principle of equivalence.

Still, some adjustments were made in order to facilitate for the enactment of religious belief practices, when no significant clashes were discerned. More or less every interviewee working at a school reported that they almost without exemption managed to arrange the scheme so that teachers’ seminars were held by the time of the Eid festival at the end of Ramadan, thus scheduling for an “unofficial” Eid school holiday.

Quite often, the argument of equivalence was entailed by - and gained rhetoric support from - narratives of personal experience (Labov 1972) or hypothetical “semi-narratives” which illustrated not

only the clash between different rights, but also between different generations of migrants. When Sarah, the senior official at the STU, called attention to the fact that many members of her union oppose exemptions permitted by headmaster, she employed this discursive strategy.

Sarah: They have a major problem with headmasters that exempt students from instructions. They [the teachers] are the ones who has to pick up the fight, when the parents wants the kids to be exempted from the camp school, "there's no problem with the showers", "the girls and the boys are strictly separated", being forced to stand up, all by yourself, that's much worse than the veiling debate. I pity the girl. First, you can see all her joy, her expectations for the camp school, and then her disappointment, when she's not allowed to join.

According to those narratives, it happens now and then that the interests and preferences between migrant and/or Muslim parents and children differ. The parents want to exempt their children from certain activities, notably camp schools, physical education or instructions in swimming, while the children wants to take part in it – and, as illustrated above – do suffer if they're not allowed to take part. In other examples, it is narrated how the children are secretive of the activities at schools, for example when it comes to sex education, for example actively hiding text books, in order not to be exempted. Thus, it is both hypothesised and depicted that there is a cleavage between the parental generation and their children, suggesting that they have diverging preferences, interests and – maybe – perspectives regarding the significance of religion.

Calling attention to this cleavage is central when giving priority to the rights of the child over the freedom of religion. This order of argument was employed by Sarah, for example, when she described the values of the STU, which, according to her, were overlapping with the values of most Swedes. You “*have to be careful about children and which path they choose*”, she stated, and “*which religion they choose, and which general path they choose*”. In order to safeguard the interests of the children, you “*have to challenge the power of the parents, because, in a way, their power is total*”, she continued. The parents have the possibility to indoctrinate the child, Sarah stated, and also – if they choose to educate it at home – “*to isolate it from impressions of the outside world*”. Indoctrination is entirely different from the purpose with schooling, she notes; the school should be broad, in the way that the teaching activities represent the diversity and the possibilities of the society, a striving which can be “*discerned in the fact that instructions in religion has replaces Christianity as a school subject*”. In this framing, the primary socialisation of the children in the family is represented in terms of indoctrination and the execution of power, and almost regarded as potential hazard, while the secondary socialization at the educational institutions safeguards the freedom of choice and the rights of the child.

Summary

A number of objections to the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab are put forth by our interviewees. In contrast to the media debate, the argument of gender equality was relatively downgraded. Rather, the interviewees focused on assumed problems with identification and communication. It was said that the abovementioned veiling practices obstructed the possibility of identifying the students at school, and also rendered the communication – and hence the instructions – at school more difficult. In comparison with the question of Islamic denominational schools, the non-tolerant stance was more manifest, although few explicit calls for a prohibition were made. Moreover, a specific discursive framing of the veiling practices could be discerned. The wearing of Burqa or Niqab was associated with phenomena such as mischief and the hidden, thus casting suspicion over the practice in question.

As an instance of the everyday life, rather than an institutional arrangement, veiling practices could arguably be considered to be of less concern for educational policy than the establishment and maintenance of Islamic denominational schools. Still, the question of prohibition has gained a lot media attention during the last years, and brought the regulating dimension to the fore. And though our material contains few explicit calls for prohibition, several interviewees claimed that a teacher must see the face of the student in order to instruct and educate. And although the goal of equivalence was less relevant in this matter, the practice of veiling was questioned with reference to universal human

rights, as the rights of the child. The right of the parent to exert influence in religious matter was questioned, since it could be regarded as a limitation of the freedom to choose direction in life - religiously and existentially.

2.4. Concluding remarks

Acceptance of Islamic belief practices in Sweden

The general aim of this report was to describe and analyze the embodiment of acceptance and recognition in discourses and practices which address cultural diversity in the Swedish educational system. In order to fulfil this general aim, we studied how teachers, headmasters, union representatives, civil servants and representatives of political parties or the civil society discuss and relate to the claims for recognition put forth by Muslim practitioners and/or policy measures designed to reach the fulfilment of those claims. Two cases are studied: the establishment of Muslim independent schools and the claims to dress veiled in public schools, put forth by Muslim youth. The purpose of this study was threefold. First, to describe the general attitudes among teachers, headmasters and other categories of professionals with an interest in educational matters towards the existence of Islamic denominational schools and the practice of wearing Burqa and/or Niqab in public schools; second, to describe which arguments that are employed in the opposition of those phenomena, and implicitly or explicitly argue for the closing-down of those schools or a prohibition of the abovementioned veiling practices; third, to analyze the ideological and policy-related underpinnings of those arguments.

A number of disadvantages with the establishment of Islamic denominational schools have been expressed. They are supposed to be divisive, both culturally and socially, and the quality of their instructions is supposed to be inadequate, in relation to the standards explicated in the national curriculum and syllabi. If the attitudes found in this study is spread all over Sweden, it could reasonable be said that Muslim schools are met by suspicion. Still, few calls for shutting down of these schools are voiced. It seems that the Muslim denominational schools are tolerated in a literal sense: it is accepted, sometimes out of pragmatically motivated considerations, but not liked. On the other hand, it could be said that the provision of a juridical and institutional space for religious minorities to establish denominational schools is a part of the politics of recognition; i.e. an educational policy which, under auspicious circumstances might provide the means for religious minorities to receive respect as equal and gain admission as normal. It must also be noted that the some of the objections to the existence of denominational schools implicitly and explicitly related to some central notions in Swedish educational policy. The notion of equivalence is a keyword in this context, and signifies on the one hand a demand for abidance by the national curriculum and syllabi, and on the other its priority over freedom of choice, and also the priority of “demos” over “ethnos”.

A number of objections to the practice of wearing Burqa or Niqab are also put forth. In contrast to the Swedish media debate, arguments based on notions of gender equality were relatively downgraded. Rather, the interviewees focused on assumed problems with *identification* and *communication*. It was said that the abovementioned veiling practices obstructed the possibility of identifying the students at school, and also rendered the communication – and hence the instructions – at school more difficult. In comparison with the question of Islamic denominational schools, the non-tolerant stance was more manifest, although few explicit calls for a prohibition were made. If the attitudes found in this study is spread all over Sweden, it could reasonable be said that opposition towards wearing Burqa or Niqab is regarded as major obstacle for the enactment of education. Moreover, a specific discursive framing of the veiling practices could be discerned in our case study. The wearing of Burqa or Niqab was associated with phenomena such as mischief and the hidden, thus casting suspicion over the practice in question.

As an instance of the everyday life, rather than an institutional arrangement, veiling practices could arguably be considered to be of less concern for educational policy than the establishment and maintenance of Islamic denominational schools. Still, the question of prohibition has gained a lot media attention during the last years, and brought the regulating dimension to the fore. And though our material contains few explicit calls for prohibition, several interviewees claimed that a teacher must see the face of the student in order to instruct and educate. And although the goal of equivalence was less relevant in this matter, the practice of veiling was questioned with reference to universal human rights, as the rights of the child. Thus, it seems like that the right to wear Burqa and Niqab in public schools are among the non-tolerable, although few explicit calls for prohibition can be discerned. So far, the material in our report, consisting of relatively limited set of qualitative data resonates with the broader tendency discerned by Mella, Palm and Bromark (2011): the resistance in Sweden against the Burqa and the Niqab is compact; 88.8 % and 86.2 % of the population find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab, respectively, at school or at work (Mella *et al* 2011:30), whereas 69.0 % and 64.6 %, respectively, find it (totally or partly) unacceptable to wear Burqa and Niqab at other public places.

If we focus on the most elaborated objections in the report, we find arguments which 1) was presented as a response to the presumably universalist claims of freedom of religion, thus setting the professional considerations which are presented above in a more general, ethical context, and 2) pointed out an ethical value of overriding importance, viz. the rights of the child. Emphasis is laid on the right of the child to “choose his own path”, a wording which is used by several interviewees, which most of all seems to refer to the first paragraph in article 14 in the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child, which aims at protecting “the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”. In the arguments of the teachers, the headmasters and the union representatives, this ethical principle makes it to possible to assert that children to a certain extent has the freedom from the religion (as well as from other loyalties, or sets of ideas and beliefs) of the parents. Although not explicitly questioning the parents rights’ to raise and guide their own children, they distinctly emphasize the autonomy of the child, and it’s potential to choose something else than that which is given within the family. The right of the parent to exert influence in religious matter was questioned, since it could be regarded as a limitation of the freedom to choose direction to the walk of life.

The emphasis on the rights of the child is regularly explicated in a specific discursive context. The right to “choose one’s own path” is contrasted to the restrictions inherent in the religiosity of the parents. Religion is regularly depicted as the repressive force, and the secular mind-set as the entity in need of protection. The possibility of secular parents putting down religious inclinations among their children is never represented. Evidently, a discursive coupling of religion with repression and secularism with liberation may be discerned in the claims for freedom from religion. It may also be noted, that the impact from parental (Islamic) faith is the only aspect of upbringing which is questioned in this context.

The notion of “equivalence” is important for this argument outlined above. Equivalence is, as we have seen, a key concept in Swedish educational policy, and frequently used in the national curricula. According to the national curricula, the education which is at disposal in the national school system should be of equal quality and accessibility to everyone. (In the context of official Swedish educational policy, the goal of “equivalence” denotes a political compromise, in so that it expresses an idea of equality and fairness in a context where freedom of choice also is a recognised and highly estimated value.) The interviewees strongly emphasize the importance of the goal of equivalence. In their argumentation, it is implied that some crucial articles in the declaration of the UN supports the standpoints taken up in the national curricula, thus providing an aura of ethical authority.

As noted above, the stress on equivalence consists of two distinct although related arguments. On the one hand, there is a demand for abidance by the law (here: steering documents such as national curriculum and syllabi), which among other things are paid attention to because Islamic schools are suspected not follow these steering documents accordingly. This interpretation of “equivalence” is related to an understanding of the term which has become more and more frequent since the introduction of freedom of choice and independent schools in Swedish educational policy, and the

decentralized system of governance of education in Sweden (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2002). In this context, where regulation is obtained through management by objective and evaluation, and responsibilities are spread between numerous responsible organizations, the goal of equivalence is equivalent (!) to abidance by the law.

On the other hand, there is wish to maintain socially integrated educational environments, in which students from different ethnicities, classes and gender meets and interacts. Thus, it seems like the equalizing and integrative objectives which were central to the compulsory school project implemented during the heyday of the Scandinavian welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990) seem to be “alive and kicking”. But the quest for recognition of minority beliefs systems, central to the policy of multiculturalism, is circumscribed. In so far, the arguments employed here gives priority to the reproduction of “demos” over the reproduction of “ethnos”. It must also be noted that the freedom of choice, an important feature in the neoliberal turn of educational policy, does not seems to be so important for the interviewees in this particular matter.

In this report, we have emphasized the connection between on the one hand the attitudes to Islamic denominational schools and Islamic practices of complete veiling, and on the other contemporary and anterior education policy in Sweden, above all the idea of equivalence in education. As such, we focus on a specifically Swedish discourse (albeit the ideas of equality and abidance by the law evidently not are exclusively Swedish). Still, it could reasonably be argued that not only national, but also transnational discourses affect what is expressed locally. The influence of specific transnational discourses, such as e.g. those labelled islamophobic (Gardell 2010), orientalist (Said 1978) or racializing (Zebiri 2008) might also be at play, mixed together with or distinctly separated from discourses of secularism or competing religions; the latter might of course also be articulated without any influence what so ever from the earlier. Nevertheless, the analytic task to discern the influence of islamophobic, orientalist or racializing discourses in our material would call for a more elaborated (and suspicious) hermeneutic than the one employed here. This is not all to say, though, that we find those hermeneutic enterprises unnecessary. Rather, on the contrary. But the resources allocated for this report did not really allow for further interpreting endeavours in those directions. Still, one of the lessons that could be learned from this report is that the arguments against tolerance or recognition of Islamic belief practices might not be primarily be based on islamophobic or orientalist discourses, but rather with reference with notions of equality, although we must remember that questions regarding the nature of the relation between these systems of meaning remain unanswered here.

One of the lessons that could be learned from this report is that the arguments against tolerance or recognition of Islamic belief practices might not be primarily be based on islamophobic or orientalist discourses, but rather with reference with notions of equality (although we must remember that questions regarding the nature of the relation between these systems of meaning remain unanswered here). The stress laid on the *professional* aspect of the opposition against veiling practices might be of importance here: in several cases, the interviewees dissociate themselves from the standpoints put forth in media, above all those who solely focus on the gender aspect of complete veiling practices. Instead, the emphasis on the professional educator dimension entails a focus on communication and identification. In the words of the American folklorists Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman (1992:149ff), these acts of discursive positioning might be seen as an effort to “maximize the intertextual gap” between their own argument and the discourse in media, which to a fair-sized extent was articulated by radical right-wing populists. This dilemma is solved by the rhetoric of equivalence, which offers a way to reject claims of recognition in tandem with the defence of values as diverse and important as social justice, the rule of law and the freedom of the individual (child). Thus, the non-tolerance of religiously motivated veiling practices could be motivated with values which is central to diverse but culturally dominant ideological universes, such as socialism and (neo-)liberalism.

CHAPTER 3: THE SWEDISH SÁMI PARLIAMENT: A CHALLENGED RECOGNITION?

3.1. Introduction ⁶

When the new Instrument of Government was adopted by the Swedish Parliament in 2010 (SFS 2010:1408)⁷ the special status of the Swedish Sámi people was recognised constitutionally for the first time. In the introductory chapter it was stated that the “opportunities of the Sámi people and ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own shall be promoted” (SFS 1974:152, Ch. 1, Art. 2). Already in 1993, however, the popularly elected Swedish Sámi Parliament (Sametinget) was established in order to grant the Sámi people cultural autonomy, and today the parliament is considered to be the main body to ensure Sámi self-determination (UN 2011: Art. 76). In many ways, the situation and status of the Sámi people can be said to be highly acknowledged and recognized in Sweden, where the political representation of the Sámi is institutionalised in and through the Sámi Parliament. The Sámi people have also been granted special language and educational rights through Sweden’s ratification of the European framework conventions concerning the rights of national minorities (SFS 2009:724). Members of the Sámi people are, for example, granted the right to communicate in their own language with courts and other important state authorities in the northern parts of Sweden where the bulk of the Sámi population are living. Furthermore, in 1998 the Swedish Government formulated a public apology for the historical injustices the Sámi people had experienced through the internal colonisation to exploit the natural resources in the north of Sweden.

This recognition of the Sámi people appears, however, to be challenged or undermined by different forms of discrimination and intolerance. There have, for instance, been several conflicts during the last few years on the right to use land and water for the maintenance of Sámi reindeer on private property, where the Swedish Supreme Court in 2011 ruled in favour of the Sámi for the first time in the case of Nordmaling (HD 2011), and there have been severe conflicts on the construction of wind power parks in traditional reindeer grazing areas. In its observations concerning how Sweden fulfils the conventions concerning the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, the UN is regularly voicing concerns over these kind of issues, for instance, regarding the fact that the issue of ownership of land and water still has not been investigated, and over the Swedish Government’s passivity in regards to clarifying the borders for the reindeer grazing area (UN 2004, Art. 12-14; UN 2008, Art. 19-22). Moreover, according to a report from the Swedish Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Sámi testifies to “harassment connected to their ethnic background” in almost all spheres of society as “part of their day-to-day life” (DO 2008, p. 24). In schools, these harassments are “manifested through taunts and other terms of abuse. One example of this is a Sámi woman who related how her son had been physically assaulted in school by three other boys screaming ‘Lapp bastard!’ and ‘Kill the Lapp bastard!’” (DO 2008, p. 24).⁸

⁶ We would like to express our gratitude to professor Jörgen Hermansson and the participants at the work shop in Arbrå (2-3 February 2012), to professor Anna Triandafyllidou and the participants at the fourth meeting of the ACCEPT PLURALISM project in Budapest (8-9 March 2012), to research professor Jo Saglie and the participants at the research seminar at the Institute for Social Research in Oslo (20 April 2012), and to Maria Wendt for their comments on earlier versions of this text. The research was made possible by funding from the ACCEPT PLURALISM project and Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

⁷ SFS is an abbreviation of Svensk författningssamling, the Swedish Code of Statutes.

⁸ The Sámi were until the 1960’s officially referred to as Lapps, an originally Finnish term that the Sámi perceive as derogatory.

It thus seems as if we, on the one hand, have institutional guarantees to protect the Sámi people and their culture in form of an institutionalised political representation, on the other we may find a lack of “virtuous citizens who are open-minded, free of prejudices and want to embrace difference” (Triandafyllidou 2011, p. 68). In this case study our aim is to investigate this coexistence of recognition and intolerance in the Swedish society. It is, however, important—as Rainer Forst (2004, p. 315) argues—“to distinguish between *toleration* as a practice (of a state, for example), and as an attitude or even a virtue, which we can call *tolerance*. The former can be present in a society without the latter.” The object of toleration in our analysis is the recognised right of the Sámi people to self-determination in capacity of being an indigenous people. Our focus will be on the Swedish Sámi Parliament as it represents the most radical institutionalized form of recognition of the Sámi people, and the right to self-determination. By looking at the media debate in Sweden since the inauguration of the Swedish Sámi Parliament in 1993, we will analyse how the parliament is conceptualised within the media discourse. Is the Sámi right to self-determination widely accepted in the Swedish society? Or is this institutional accommodation of the Sámi people challenged by a widespread intolerance? If so, what might the consequences be for the political representation of the Sámi?

Theoretical debate

The contemporary debate on indigenous rights in international law and political theory serves both as the theoretical starting-point and the political setting of our analysis. In the legal debate, the focus was for a long time the status of and development in international law in itself (Anaya 2004; Castellino & Walsh 2005; Kingsbury 1998; Thornberry 2002): what conventions or treaties were applicable to indigenous peoples? With the adoption of the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in 2007 these questions got an unequivocal answer: indigenous rights are human rights and indigenous peoples are equal to other peoples within international law (Allen & Xanthaki 2011; Henriksen, Sheinin & Åhrén 2007). Accordingly, the UN Declaration states, among many other things, that “[i]ndigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” (Art. 3). Despite this international recognition of indigenous rights, however, the question of what these rights actually mean in political practice on a nation-state level still remains contested. Indigenous self-determination seems, for instance, to be “notoriously difficult to pin down” in international law, and “there is little if any guidance as to what [...] means in actual practice” (Quane 2011: 269).

In the contemporary debate in political theory, the practical implications of the right to self-determination seems to be just as vague, although there exists a normative consensus on the idea that indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination implies some kind of political power, like intra-state autonomy or other forms of self-governance within an already existing state, and not a right to secession (Buchanan 2004; Kymlicka 1995; Young 2005). This conclusion is primarily a practical one due to the actual situation of indigenous peoples (Levy 2003; Moore 2003), and it is often supported by references to the will and claims of the indigenous peoples’ themselves (Kingsbury 2001; Robbins 2011; Stavenhagen 2011). Moreover, this conclusion is well in accordance with the UN Declaration in which it is explicitly stated that “[n]othing in this Declaration may be interpreted as [...] authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally, or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States” (Art. 46), an interpretation of the right to self-determination decisive in the process of ratification (Anaya 2009; Wiessner 2008). In this perspective, the right to self-determination ought to be given its substance by the fourth article in the Declaration, which states that “[i]ndigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs [...]” (Art. 4).

With this lack of a common understanding of self-determination—what it ought to mean in political practice and through what particular political institutions this right can be exercised—it comes as no surprise that different nation-states have interpreted the right to self-determination in different ways and with many different institutional constructions. There are, for instance, only 22 countries that have ratified the 1989 ILO Convention No. 169 *Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries* (ILOLEX 2012), Sweden is not among them. One explanation for this forbearance has been

that it—from the perspective of the Swedish state—has been unclear what ratification could imply in practical political terms. In more general terms one could, however, say that if Sweden should ratify this convention, the state would be forced to delineate the territory that the Sámi people has traditionally used and could claim ownership of (Norberg 2007; Chesters 2009). Furthermore, in countries where the right to self-determination is recognised, there are different ways of interpreting on what societal spheres this right ought to be applied—the political, economical, cultural, or social—and there are great differences in the institutional designs in how to accommodate indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. In some cases, separate institutions have been created to ensure political representation (like the Sámi Parliament); in other, indigenous peoples have reserved seats in the national parliament, or self-governance within a well defined territory, i.e. intra-state autonomy (Alfredson 2003; Kontos 2004; Minnerup & Solberg 2011; Nettheim et al. 2002; Robbins 2010). The Swedish Sámi Parliament is thus one of many ways to institutionalise a right to self-determination, and in a more general perspective our case evolves around the questions if it can safeguard the recognised indigenous rights of the Swedish Sámi people and how it functions as a representative body. Has the Sámi Parliament developed into a "vehicle for a form of self-determination" and has it become "an important symbol of Indigenous status as a 'nation within'" (Robbins 2011, p. 47)?

Within the ACCEPT framework the theoretical debate on indigenous rights brings another important question to the fore: is this right to self-determination and political representation an exclusive right of indigenous peoples, or it is just as justifiable for national minorities? If we for a moment return to the contemporary debate in political theory it is worth noticing that none of the dominant justificatory arguments in favour of indigenous rights provide us with a clear normative distinction between the rights claims of indigenous peoples and the claims made by national minorities. Will Kymlicka (2001, pp. 128-130, 2011, pp. 199-208), for instance, explicitly rejects such a distinction on a normative level. In his theory of liberal multiculturalism culture is of major importance and group-specific rights (including indigenous rights) are justified by referring to culture as a context of choice promoting individual freedom and autonomy (Kymlicka 1995). This focus on culture has, however, been severely criticised for its neglect of what is specific to indigenous peoples; that they have been deprived of their land and natural resources, and involuntarily incorporated under an external power. This perspective is the starting-point for most arguments in favour of indigenous self-determination based on rectificatory justice. Margaret Moore (2003, p. 90), for instance, describes indigenous peoples' self-determination to be legitimate due to the historical "pattern of dispossession, conquest and marginalization". It seems, however, obvious that indigenous rights "are not just [a remedy] to correct historical wrongs, but also to protect against current and potential future wrongs in light of the particular set of vulnerabilities that characterize indigenous peoples" (Anaya 2004, p. 125, n. 83-84). Contemporary injustices are the starting-point in the third normative argument—freedom as non-domination—in which indigenous rights are justified as a way to remedy injustices due to asymmetric relations of power within a society (Young 2005). Indigenous self-determination is a way to resist and combat the on-going exclusion, subjugation and domination of indigenous peoples.

Although we will not discuss the question if indigenous rights could be justified in a different way than the rights of national minorities in our case study, it is obvious that national minorities—just like indigenous peoples—have (or have had) their own societal culture, that some national minorities have been subject to historical injustices, that some are victims of on-going human rights violations, and that national minorities most often are in a non-dominant position in the societies in which they live.

A brief history of recognition: the formation of the Swedish Sámi Parliament

The Sámi are an indigenous people living in north-western Europe, divided in the course of history by four nation states: Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden (see Figure 1. below). Despite this fact, "the Saami constitute one people" and the "national borders shall not infringe on our national unity", as it was declared by the 19th Saami Conference in Rovaniemi in 2008. The *Rovaniemi Declaration* further emphasises, among other things, "that the Saami people has inhabited its traditional homeland—Sápmi—since time immemorial and long before national borders were drawn [...] and] as a people the Saami have the right to self-determination" (Saami Conference 2008). The estimates of the number of Sámi differ depending on the sources used but the figures most often seen varies between 80-100 000,

of which more than half resides in Norway, around 20 000 in Sweden, 8 000 in Finland and 2 000 in Russia. It is quite common to distinguish Sámi ethnicity by, for instance, attachment to language (there are three languages with several dialects), their traditional livelihoods differing according to their place of residence (foremost reindeer herding and fishing), a common historical memory of their ancestral homeland and the traditional Sámi religion. As citizens in four different countries, the Sámi are facing different sets of legislation, and as a people they have both similar and different experiences of the dominant society's homogenising and assimilationist thrust, as well as of segregation policies striving to separate them from other members of society. A new collective Sámi identity has been more firmly articulated the last decades across the borders of the four countries partitioning the Sámi (Eriksson 1997, pp. 132-133), including the "symbolic construction of a Sami nation, *Sápmi*, with its own flag, National Day, and national anthem" (Pietikäinen 2003, p. 582).⁹

Figure 1. *Sápmi*



Map from the Museum of Västerbotten (Västerbottens museum 2012).

The Sámi people have been an object in Swedish politics for centuries. Contemporary Sámi policy has its origins in the politics formulated during the end of the 1800's around an image of the Sámi as reindeer herders, and a belief that they were physically adapted to this industry and unable to support themselves through any other profession. Humanitarian, economic and ethnographic motives could be discerned behind this policy, but its' basic foundation was ideas about cultural hierarchies, where the Sámi and Sámi culture were considered inferior to the more developed Swedish culture (Mörkenstam 2005, pp. 437-442). In the changing political climate in the aftermath of World War II, however, it was no longer possible to openly uphold policies based on ideas about cultural hierarchies; rather, the Sámi were to be assimilated into and integrated in the full-blown Swedish welfare state (Lantto & Mörkenstam 2008, pp. 34-35). Moreover, by the formation in 1950 of the first national Sámi organization, the National Union of the Swedish Sámi (*Svenska Samernas Riksförbund*, SSR)—after half a century of political mobilization—the Sámi movement was strengthened. SSR challenged the Swedish policy in their claims that the Sámi had older usage of the land than the Swedish state, and that Sámi reindeer herding was based on Sámi rights to land and water. During the 1960's SSR started to justify Sámi rights in their capacity of being an indigenous people (Lantto 2000, pp. 91-95).

⁹ In this context it is worth noticing that there exists different, and partially overlapping names for this northern region; the North Calotte, the Barents Region, and *Sápmi* (Lantto 2010).

The political mobilisation of the Sámi was no doubt decisive for a transformation of the Swedish Sámi policy, and made the formal recognition of the Sámi as an indigenous people inevitable. In 1977 the Sámi people were recognised as an indigenous people and a minority in their own country by a Swedish government for the first time (Prop. 1976/77:80, p. 107).¹⁰ The recognition of the Sámi as an indigenous people put the right to self-determination on the political agenda, and the first article in the 1966 UN *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights* concerning the principle of “all peoples” right to self-determination was held to be an obvious starting-point in assessing Sámi rights claims (Johansson 2008, pp. 147-182; Mörkenstam 1999, pp. 191-224).¹¹ In accordance with the international debate of the time, the right to self-determination was interpreted as a right of peoples subject to “classical colonialism”, according to the dominant “blue water thesis” (Anaya 2004, p. 54), and thus not applicable to peoples that had been subject to internal colonisation. It could be stated that there is a bias in international politics in formulating the right to self-determination for national groups in terms of territorial concentration, and thus excluding peoples or groups that are dispersed or nomadic. Theories of property have generally (since the days of John Locke) focused upon agricultural rights and not nomadic “property rights”, as the customary land use was not considered “a legitimate type of property” (Tully 1993, p. 139). Moreover, the rights of property have mainly focused upon individuals and so-called material values (Freeman 2011; Roth 2005). Article 27 of the same UN Convention was, however, found to apply to the Sámi. It enacts that in “those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language”. Although this UN article was primarily formulated in individual terms (“persons belonging to such minorities...”), in Swedish politics it was interpreted as a justification of collective rights: the Sámi had both a right “to reign over their cultural issues without involvement of the State (passive rights)”, and a right “to State support in order to maintain their cultural activities (active rights)” (SOU 1986:36, p. 131).¹²

This interpretation of international law justified the establishment of a Sámi Parliament in 1993. The newly formed parliament was given the status as an administrative authority under the Swedish Government.¹³ The idea behind this construction was to guarantee the Sámi people cultural autonomy, while making it absolutely clear that the parliament was not “a body of self-government” (Prop. 1992/93:32, p. 35). However, it is a popularly elected administrative authority and the parliament is assigned two different functions, both as an administrative authority whose tasks are strictly regulated by law and as a popularly elected parliament representing the Sámi people.¹⁴ This dual character of the Sámi Parliament and its close link to the Swedish state follows a well known pattern in Swedish politics, which traditionally has been imbued by “corporativism” in the sense that the Swedish state has been eager to define the conditions for the encounters with various interest and identity groups in a rather similar negotiation fashion (Rothstein 1992). This institutional design obviously has an inherent potential to create a clash of interest between these two different roles: as an administrative authority

¹⁰ Prop. is an abbreviation of Proposition, Government Bill.

¹¹ The first article of the 1966 UN International Convention on Civil and Political Rights states that: “All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

¹² SOU is an abbreviation of Statens offentliga utredningar, Swedish Government Official Reports.

¹³ In comparison to the Sámi Parliaments in Finland and Norway, it appears as if the Swedish Sámi Parliament has a weaker position, although the organization of the parliaments is roughly the same (Josefsen 2007; Josefsen & Saglie 2011).

¹⁴ The general task of the Sámi Parliament is to act for a living Sámi culture. Substantially, it shall, among other things, allocate funding to cultural activities and Sámi organisations, appoint the Board of Directors for the Sámi School, guide and direct the work on the Sámi languages, and look after matters of special importance to the Sámi people (SFS 1992:1433: Ch. 2, Art. 1). Moreover, the Sámi Parliament shall keep track of, evaluate and keep the government informed on the development of the politics on national minorities and minority languages concerning the Sámi people and languages (SFS 2009:1395, Art. 2). The parliament is also responsible for a number of administrative tasks regarding the reindeer industry regulated in the Reindeer Grazing Act (SFS 1971:437).

the Sámi Parliament ought to implement the policy of the Swedish government, and as a parliament elected by the Sámi people it ought to represent the will of its constituency (Lawrence & Mörkenstam 2012, pp.43-45). In addition, with the status as an administrative authority, the parliament is not granted any actual political power, such as a right of participation in decision-making, veto-rights concerning administrative decisions, or independent sources of income (like taxation rights). The parliament's opportunity to act on their own initiative is thus limited by the grants from the Swedish state, and as an administrative authority it ought to "observe objectivity" (SOU 1989:41, pp. 151-159, 305-311; Prop. 1992/93:32, p. 35). In 2010 the Sámi Parliament was allocated a total amount of 185 146 000 SEK, around 19 405 000 EUR (Prop. 2009/10:1), where all grants were directed towards its role as an administrative authority.

The political challenge

The Swedish Sámi Parliament represents the most radical institutionalized form of recognition of any minority group in Sweden. The parliament has, however, been severely criticised since its inauguration in 1993 both by the Sámi and the Swedish state. In the critique formulated by the Sámi organisations and the Sámi Parliament itself, the institutional design of the parliament and its incapacity to safeguard the Sámi people's right to self-determination has been in focus (Sametinget 2004; Sametinget 2005; SSR 2011). As a consequence of the parliament's limited mandate and its status as an administrative authority under the Swedish government, many of the members of parliament worry about the long-term legitimacy of the parliament within the Sámi constituency (Lawrence & Mörkenstam 2012, p. 45). Different polls conducted seem to support the anxieties of the MP's. In a poll in 2008, for instance, only 24 percent of the electorate expressed a high or very high confidence in the Sámi Parliament, and 37 percent of the electorate had a low or very low confidence (Sametinget 2008). The critique from the Swedish state has mainly been directed towards the Sámi Parliament as an administrative authority in their exercise of public policy. The parliament has been criticised for wanting follow-up of its activities, for a lack of systematic planning of its activities, for unclear internal hierarchies, and for breaching its budget on several occasions (Statskontoret 2010:15, pp. 43-45). In addition, the parliament's knowledge on different issues has been challenged, as well as their impartiality and objectivity as an administrative authority (Prop. 2005/06:86, pp. 36, 54; Wasara-Hammare 2002, pp. 159-160).

Bearing this critical stances in mind, our study contributes to new knowledge on the discourse surrounding the Sámi Parliament with its focus on the question if the Swedish recognition of the Sámi people is more limited then you might expect from a mere look at the institutional level. In a wider national context, our study contributes to the understanding of in what ways, if any, this sort of institutional arrangement challenge the tolerance in the (perceived) multicultural Swedish society. We will thereby discuss the boundaries of Swedish tolerance, and look closer into the coexistence of a range of public reforms of recognition on the one hand, and a discourse of intolerance, or a very limited tolerance, on the other. We believe that the case study of the Swedish Sámi Parliament is especially well chosen from this perspective. Firstly, and as mentioned before, it is the most radical form of recognition of any minority group in Sweden. Secondly, we believe that our case could be seen as a "most likely case" in terms of the chances of acceptance of specific institutional arrangements for the representation of minority groups in Sweden in comparison to the other national minorities recognised in Sweden (Swedish Finns, Meänkielis, Romas, and Jews). Our reason for this presumption is that the Sámi people have been recognised as a specific group in Sweden for centuries, they have been an object in Swedish politics for more than a century, they are well integrated in the historical narrative of Sweden (although often founded on exoticism and stereotypical images) and they are recognised as an indigenous people.

In a European perspective our case is unique as well, as the Sámi is the only people living within European borders that are recognised as an indigenous people in accordance with international law, although there are specific institutional arrangements in Denmark for the Inuit's of Greenland as well (where Greenland, as a self-governing unit within the Danish realm, elects two members to the Danish Parliament). In addition, the institutionalisation of a popularly elected Sámi Parliament is also a quite

radical reform in terms of recognition of a minority group in a wider European and international perspective. In a UN-report, for instance, the Sámi Parliaments in the Nordic countries were presented as important models “for indigenous self-governance and participation in decision-making that could inspire the development of similar institutions elsewhere in the world” (UN 2011, Art. 37).

3.2. Methodology

The media presentation of the Sámi Parliament is in this article analysed in terms of the order of discourse—in the words of Michel Foucault (1972, p. 57)—as the “various rhetorical schemata according to which groups of statements may be combined (how descriptions, deductions, definitions, whose succession characterizes the architecture of a text, are linked together)”. These rhetorical schemata make the political discussion meaningful, since they compose a common understanding among the participants involved in debate. Hence, to become a serious participant in a specific discourse, it is necessary to share the common language in which reality is depicted and problems formulated. In this way the societal conceptions restrict (as well as enable) the policy conductible in a specific context. The dominating conceptions provide a logical field of possible political options—they prescribe how to act, think and express oneself—and thereby set normative limits for legitimate action. Moreover, the participant has to share the rules of evidence and prediction, i.e. to claims of truth. “Truth” is here “to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” (Foucault 1989, p. 133). The knowledge produced and ordered in discourse authorise (political) action by defining what is to be considered as *valid* knowledge. Certain political measures and statements can thereby be either affirmed or rejected as being within discourse, whilst others are excluded beforehand.

As it follows from this more general approach, it makes no sense to consider the “objects” of a policy proposal or a public debate “as existing independently of the way they are spoken about or represented”; rather, we should focus on the “competing constructions of issues” that are involved in such a debate and “the ways in which these constructions leave other issues untouched” (Bacchi 1999, pp. 1-4). The purpose of this methodological approach is to reveal the assumptions that lie behind a certain representation of a problem as well as the effects that such a representation might produce. In this sense, our analysis can be seen as a form of social critique aiming for what Richard Rorty (2006, p. 61) has referred to as “the recognition of contingency,” i.e. to become aware of the essentially constructed and homogenizing character of the ideas and norms on which the social order is based. According to this view, once we realize that the predominant way of “conceptualizing the real” (Owen 2002, p. 216) is just one among many possible perspectives on the world, then it becomes possible to evaluate this conceptualization and to compare it with other points of view.

To be sure, we investigate only that part of the political debate which is reported in the daily press. It is thus difficult to determine whether the debate over the Sámi Parliament, as it is conducted in the public sphere dominated by the mass media, actually reflects ideas and beliefs of the wider community. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to assume that “collective actors operating outside the political system or outside large organisations normally have fewer opportunities to influence the content and views presented in the media” (Habermas 1996, p. 377). Furthermore, irrespective of how the public sphere and the political system are related to each other, the way in which a controversial political issue is represented in news coverage will affect the way that this issue is dealt with at the level of political decision making (Hall 1997). Newsmakers and media are deeply involved in the process whereby some social practices are represented as part of the natural order while other such practices are constituted as problems: “In the view generally accepted by students of discourse and of political language, [news accounts] construct the social reality to which people respond and help construct the subjectivity of actors and spectators as well; in the process, they reinforce established power structures and value hierarchies” (Edelman 1988, p. 34).

While the media discourse in general can be seen as the most influential form of public discourse, this is particularly true for its role in the debate relating to ethnic affairs. As Teun van Dijk (2002, p. 152) argues, knowledge about ethnic minorities is largely based on information derived from the mass media: “Speakers routinely refer to television or newspapers as their source (and authority) of knowledge or opinions about ethnic minorities”, and the news in general and the press in particular “is at the basis of most beliefs about minorities”. Given the importance of the news media in shaping the opinion on ethnic minorities, one way to answer the first question posed in this study—if the Sámi right to self-determination is widely accepted in the Swedish society—is to focus on the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament. To explore and answer this we applied the following set of sub-questions to our material. Is the Sámi Parliament conceived of as a problem and if so: What is the problem represented to be? What is perceived to be the causes of this problem? And what are the consequences for the political representation of the Sámi?

The empirical analysis

In the present study, we have analyzed the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament in eight national and local daily newspapers during the years 2005, 2009-2011.¹⁵ We examined all the articles containing the term “Sameting/et” (Sámi Parliament), a number of 772 articles. The national papers, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN, liberal) and *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD, conservative), are two of the most influential dailies in Sweden. The local newspapers were selected primarily to represent three counties in northern Sweden, Norrbotten, Västerbotten och Jämtland, traditionally inhabited by the Sámi people. The journals chosen, *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* (NSD, social democratic), *Norrbottens-Kuriren* (NK, conservative), *Norran* (N, liberal), *Västerbottens Folkblad* (VF, social democratic), *Västerbottens-Kuriren* (VK, liberal), and *Östersunds-Posten* (ÖP, center-right) are the most prominent local newspapers in these counties. In this context it is worth noticing that there are no local or regional daily newspapers in Sámi in Sweden.¹⁶

Although our initial ambition was to cover all articles written on the Sámi Parliament in these eight dailies since its inauguration in 1993, we had to reduce our ambition somewhat due to the fact that only a few of the newspapers in question are digitalised and searchable for the entire period. Instead of covering all the years, and the whole year, we have chosen to analyse articles from the election years 1993, 1997, and 2001 (two elections) ten days before and ten days after the elections (in addition to the analysis of all articles in our eight dailies during the election years 2005 and 2009, and the non-election years 2010 and 2011),¹⁷ a number of 479 articles. For the first three election years we have used the *Sámi Press Archive* (SPA, which contains clippings from 1966 to 2002) in order to get a more comprehensive picture, thus using all articles published in any Swedish journal during the period of our study.¹⁸ Altogether we analysed a total number of 1251 articles.

Furthermore, we started out by making an analysis of the headlines of all the articles published in three non-election years (1994, 2000, and 2011), where we used the SPA for the first two years and our eight dailies for the last.

3.3. The Sami Parliament in the Swedish Press

¹⁵ One newspaper, Västerbottens Folkblad (VF), was only analysed the years 2009-2011.

¹⁶ The situation in Finland is the same, while there are two Sámi newspapers in Norway (Josefsen & Skogerbø 2011; Pietikäinen 2008), although only one of them is in Sámi. Research on the Sámi public sphere in conjunction with the election to the Sámi Parliament in Norway 2009, shows however that the regional and local newspapers (in Norwegian) was considerably more important as sources of information for the Sámi electorate during the election campaign than Sámi newspapers (Karlsen 2011).

¹⁷ Two of the newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) and *Västerbottens-Kuriren* (VK), has been analysed the whole year, all the election years since 1993, one newspaper, *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), since 1997 and *Östersunds-posten* (ÖP) since 2001.

¹⁸ We analysed a total amount of 301 articles from the Sámi Press Archive (SPA), in addition to 178 articles from DN, VK, SvD and ÖP.

A first indication of how the Sámi Parliament is depicted in the media can be obtained by looking at the range of topics covered in the newspaper articles. As stated by van Dijk (2000, p. 38), “since topics express the most important information of a text [...] they are also best understood and memorized by the readers”. The major theme of an article is typically expressed in the title, as “[h]eadlines summarize the most important information of a news report, and hence also express its main topic” (van Dijk 2002, p. 152). Earlier research show that news reports about ethnic minorities may be biased in the sense that they rely on negative stereotypes. In other words, minorities are often portrayed in terms of a very limited set of topics (van Dijk 2002, p. 152). To get an impression of what kind of topics the Sámi Parliament was associated with in the media we examined a total of 217 articles that mentioned the word “Sameting/et” in the headline in three different non-election years. The number of articles was quite stable over the years, just like the number of topics (some of the headlines gave expression to more than one topic): in 1994 there were 77 articles that contained “Sameting/et” in the headline and 97 topics, in 2000 there were 62 articles and 90 topics, and in 2011 we found 78 articles and 108 topics.

When we sorted the headlines according to the topics in the headlines we found two dominant topics (see Table 1.) The first concerned the performance of the parliament as an administrative authority; the second described the political (in)stability of the parliament and thus evolved around its role as a representative body of the Sámi people. The other topics we found, although rarely, concerned the cultural identity of the Sámi people, the construction of a new building for the Sámi Parliament and public grants.

Table 1. *Topics in the 1994, 2000 and 2011 Swedish newspaper coverage of the Sámi Parliament (percentage in brackets).*

Topics	2011	2000	1994
Administrative performance	50 (46,3%)	31 (34,4%)	26 (26,8%)
Political stability	50 (46,3%)	33 (36,7%)	56 (57,7%)
Cultural identity	1 (0,9%)	8 (8,9%)	4 (4,1%)
Parliament building	5 (4,6%)	4 (4,4%)	2 (2,1%)
Public grants	0	4 (4,4%)	5 (5,2%)
Other topics	2 (1,9%)	10 (11,1%)	4 (4,1%)
Total:	108 (100%)	90 (100%)	97 (100%)

The conclusions that can be drawn from this examination of newspaper headlines are of course rather limited. However, it is obvious that the media discourse on the Sámi Parliament is characterized by a very limited set of topics out of which the political instability and the administrative performance of the parliament are most prominent. This is not too surprising as these topics obviously spring out of the dual role of the parliament as both representative body of the Sámi people and as an administrative authority under the Swedish government. More interesting, however, is that these topics tend to be conceptualised as major problems and represented in a negatively biased way, as is often the case in news reporting on ethnic minorities, where minorities most often are problematised and associated with negatively valued phenomena, such as welfare dependence, unemployment and crime (Brune 2004; Pietikäinen 2003; van Dijk 1993). As for the political stability of the parliament, for instance, headlines that refer to what can be considered as the normal activity of the parliament—“The Sámi Parliament adopted the budget proposal” (N, 110225), “Unanimous no to the EU at the Sámi Parliament” (TT, 941025), or “The Sámi Parliament sent a statement by fax to the Swedish Riksdag [the national assembly]” (TT, 940316)—are rather uncommon.¹⁹ Instead, most of the examined headlines tend to focus on negative attributes such as: “‘Pure Balkan war in the Sámi Parliament’—a negotiator sort out the chaos” (NV, 000112), “Devastating critique of the Chairman of the Sámi Parliament” (NSD, 940119), and “Severe divisiveness within the Board of the Sámi Parliament” (VK, 110202).

¹⁹ All quotations are translated by the authors.

A similar news reporting is apparent in the case of the administrative performance of the parliament. Neutral or positive headlines such as: "New Chief Secretary of the Sámi Parliament appointed temporarily" (NSD, 111117), or "Larger secretariat will make the Sámi Parliament even stronger" (ÖP, 940318) are rather infrequent, while negative headlines such as "Bad handling of matters by the Sámi Parliament" (NK, 110715), or "Several of the County's Sámi villages gives the Sámi Parliament a reprimand on the delimitations" (VK, 110323) are far more common. In a wider Swedish media discourse, this is a common way to represent northern Sweden, where "the focus on negative news is symptomatic [...] Rather than focusing the attention on underlying historical and structural factors that contribute to some of the problems faced by the region, the problems are often understood in terms of cultural and lifestyle differences between the north and the south of Sweden" (Eriksson 2008, p. 379).²⁰

If we wish to understand how the Sámi Parliament is depicted in the media discourse, however, our headline analysis will only give us part of the answer. In order to provide a more thorough analysis and in order to deal adequately with our three sub-questions we have to examine the press coverage of the Sámi Parliament in more detail. In the following we will thus primarily focus on "the ways in which 'social problems' are represented and what follows from these representations" (Bacchi 1999, p. 6). And in doing so we will use our headline analysis—and the two dominant topics we found—as a methodological tool in our categorisation of the articles. What news representations are produced and reproduced within the media discourse? What is taken for granted and thus not critically examined?

Conceptions of the Sámi Parliament: the problems and their causes

When we now turn our attention to the more comprehensive analysis of the Swedish press and its coverage of the Sámi Parliament, it is clear that the "sameting" is conceptualised as a problem mainly in terms of its political instability or its weak administrative performance. It is, however, important to note that the parliament is not always represented as a problem, after all a substantial part of the news reports about the parliament deals with issues such as resolutions and election results without referring to or evaluating its performance or capacity. Nevertheless, a high proportion of the media coverage portrays the parliament as a problem. In the years we have analysed, between 25 to 50 percent of the articles that contained the word "sameting/et" portrayed the parliament as problematic (see Table 2.), either in terms of its political instability or in terms of its administrative performance. But what kind of problem is the parliament represented to be?

Table 2. *Articles representing the Sámi Parliament (SP) as problematic or neutral in years with more than 100 articles analysed, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2011 (total number of articles in brackets).*

Year	2001	2005	2009	2010	2011
Total no. of topics	126 (114)	156 (141)	300 (279)	192 (181)	179 (171)
SP as a problem	50,8%	30,8%	26,3%	30,7%	42,5%
Neutral	49,2%	69,2%	73,7%	69,3%	57,5%

The Sámi Parliament as a representative body of the Sámi people

The first issue around which the Swedish Sámi Parliament is portrayed as a problem in the media has to do with its function as a representative body of the Sámi people. This critique evolves around the political instability of the parliament. For instance, the last election to the Sámi Parliament took place in May 2009, and in the outcome of the election the 31 parliamentary seats were distributed among 8 different political parties, leaving the parliament with an unstable majority. As a consequence of this

²⁰ In Finland the North is represented in a similar fashion (Pietikäinen & Hujanen 2003).

parliamentary situation, the parliament has been characterised by political turbulence and changed president four times in a little more than two years, something that has been widely covered by the media. There are in the news coverage four different ways of explaining this instability of the parliament.

In the first, the political instability is explained as a consequence of the institutional design of the parliament related to its dual roles, its weak political power and the lack of an election threshold. According to a political scientist who is quoted in *Östersunds-Posten*, for instance, the political instability has to do with the structural design of the parliament as "both an administrative authority and a representative assembly, a combination actually impossible in Swedish legislation or in the Swedish political system". As she continues to argue, the role of the Sámi Parliament has to be strengthened, because "if one had anything to decide upon, then one would not have the time to quarrel about how decisions are to be made or about rules of procedures here and there; rather, one should probably spend time to actually make the decisions" (ÖP, 110525). This conceptualisation of the political instability as related to the institutional design of the parliament is to be found in a few news reports every year covered by our analysis. Back in 2001, for instance, *Dagens Nyheter* published an editorial in which it was argued that: "The Sámi Parliament that was inaugurated by Unckel [Per Unckel, former Minister with responsibilities for Sámi issues, 1991-1994] is an impossible construction both for administration and conflict solution [...] Not a single one of the prerequisites needed for a political assembly to function were at hand for the Sámi Parliament" (DN, 010107). The institutional design was also criticised in the Umeå-based paper *Västerbottens-Kuriren* the day before the first election in 1993: "No electoral threshold like the one to get into the Riksdag exists [...] The Sámi Parliament thus runs the risk of being divided into many separate camps" (VK, 930517). Reports in which the Sámi Parliament is represented mainly as a problem caused by its institutional design are, however, marginal within the media discourse. As a matter of fact, we have found only 34 articles (or 3,3 percent of the total number of articles) containing a similar approach during the whole period of analysis. In 2011 only about 2 percent of the articles portrayed the parliament in such a way.²¹

Secondly, and more commonly, the political instability of the parliament is described as a consequence of persistent and unsolvable political cleavages between the Sámi political parties. This explanation was particularly evident in the media coverage of the elections in 1993, i.e. prior to the inauguration of the parliament. The most influential Swedish news agency, *TT*, made a notice of the first Sámi election in the following way: "On Sunday the Swedish Sámi will for the first time vote to elect their own Sámi Parliament. The election campaign give witness to a divisiveness among the Sámi." (TT, 930513). In a report published in *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* a few days before the election it was stated that "in the around 15 issues that will be discussed in the Sámi Parliament the disagreement is complete" (NSD, 930511). The number of political parties in the election was commented on by many observers. A civil servant working for the municipality of Kiruna, where the parliament is situated, was for instance quoted arguing that: "I reckon that there are good reasons for the Sámi to consider what they are doing. Thirteen parties indicate divisiveness instead of the unity needed" (NSD, 930513). Furthermore, one day prior to the election, the same newspaper published a similar statement by the Swedish Prime Minister [Carl Bildt]: "But it worries me that there are as many as 13 parties. I do hope that you can stand united, he said" (NSD, 930516).²² But, as is was claimed in another article, "the Sámi will not admit that the many parties running for election are a sign of division" (VF, 930514).

This way of explaining the political instability as a consequence of fierce conflicts between the political parties has dominated the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament ever since its inauguration. In a typical presentation of the political debate which preceded the 1997 election *Svenska Dagbladet* reports: "For an untrained ear it sounds as if the parties support the same things: to strengthen the Sámi

²¹ In addition to the article referred to above, see NSD, 110114, 110525 and VK, 110521.

²² See also NK, 930507, 930512, 930515; NSD, 930507, 930512; SVD, 930514; TT, 930513, 930525, 930526; ÖP, 930526.

culture, to raise the knowledge of their own language, to represent the interests of the hunting, fishing and reindeer industry and to increase the unity among the Sámi of today. However, it does not take long for Börje Allas [representative of the party *Samisk solidaritet*] [...] to criticise the other parties for representing special interests” (SVD, 970413). Similarly, in *Norrländska Socialdemokraten*’s coverage of a debate among the party leaders before the elections in May 2001: ”The heat is up before the election to the Sámi Parliament. Tuesday evening there was a final debate between the party leaders. The reindeer industry was in focus. [...] The debate was good as the concepts of ‘sandpit’ and ‘throwing pies’ [Swedish expressions for real low forms of argumentation], well-known to the Sámi MPs, was kept out of the door of the Community Centre” (NK, 010517).

In addition to this focus on the seemingly irreconcilable division between the Sámi political parties, the third way the media reports explain the political instability is by stressing the stubborn unwillingness among the parliamentarians to agree upon compromises. This has frequently been the case the last few years. Regarding the development following the election in 2009 for instance, the Luleå-based newspaper *Norbottens-Kuriren* described the parliamentary situation in terms of a severe crisis: “The crisis in the Sámi Parliament is fundamental. The opposition parties now demand that a new Board is elected at the next plenary session”. The same article continued by reporting that ”the opposition” declared that “they will not attend the discussions on matters concerning the organisation of the Sámi Parliament, the management of the secretariat or on politically sensitive matters. With this, the Board will not be able to make decisions since it is not numerous enough to make decisions according to the Sámi Parliament Act” (NK, 110405). A similar depiction was to be found in several reports, for instance, in *Norrländska Socialdemokraten*: ”The work of the Sámi Parliament has got completely wrecked. The result of the conflicts is that almost no decisions are made this year. [...] At the Board meeting March 21 we had 40 matters, but one of the members refused to sign. Now in April we had 85 matters, says Ingrid Inga [President of the Sámi Parliament]. ‘It is completely unacceptable that some members do not participate in meetings or refuse to discuss certain matters’” (NSD, 110507).²³ Why this crisis appears, was in one of the articles above explained by quoting an MP, claiming that the Sámi were not “ready to submit to the democratic system” (NK, 110405).

To be sure, while such news reports has been particularly frequent during the last few years, the depiction of the political instability as a consequence of an absence of political will to compromise has been a recurring theme in the media coverage. ”If it is anything the election to the Sámi Parliament on Sunday ought to result in, more than a democratic distribution of votes between parties, it is more cooperation and less conflict” (NSD, 970520), reported one newspaper in conjunction to the 1997 election. In a report from a plenary session the same year this unwillingness to compromise was once more in focus: ”The Sámi Parliament in Malå was disrupted Friday when several matters were still at the agenda. Now it is a huge quarrel about the proceedings. It is very unfortunate that the Sámi Parliament is paralysed by conflicts on regulations and procedural issues” (VK, 971118).

The political instability of the parliament is, finally, often described as a result of a personal antagonism between the Sámi MPs. In fact, media reporting of the parliament often focuses on this kind of quarrel between individual politicians. In an article describing a political debate before the election in 1993 between candidates from different political parties, *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* wrote: “What instigated the irritation in Kiruna was that Nils-Gustav Labba had accepted to lead the debate, in spite of being on the list of *Samernas riksförbund*. Nisse Sarri and Lars-Wilhelm Svonni were two of the persons protesting. [...] *Renägareförbundets* Nils Valkeanpää and *Jakt- och fiskesamernas* Håkan Jonsson were quarrelling with each other in a discussion on reindeer” (NSD, 930507).²⁴ This description sometimes involves officials employed by the Sámi Parliament as well. For instance, *Östersunds-Posten* reports that: “Nils-Gustav Labba, Head of the Sámi Information Centre, has been fired. [...] He himself claims that the dismissal was an act of revenge and describes it as a personal vendetta” (ÖP, 110916).²⁵ Confirming this depiction of the parliament, towards the end

²³ For similar reports, see for instance NK, 110202, 110506; NSD, 110202, 110208, 110420, 110524; VK, 110202, 110219, 110325, 110331, 110506; and N, 110506, 110901.

²⁴ See also NSD, 930511; 930512; NK, 930507; 930512.

²⁵ See also VF, 10917.

of 2011, some of the analyzed newspapers referred to a poll which indicated that many of the publicly elected politicians had experienced personal threats during the plenary sessions: “One third of the members of the Sámi Parliament feel threatened during the sessions” (NK, 111219).²⁶

There are thus two different ways to explain this problem (and its sources) within the news discourse. In the first, the problem is considered to be external to the Sámi Parliament, as it is the institutional design of the parliament that hampers its representative capacity and constrains the political parties and the MPs. In the second way to explain the limited representative capacity, the problem is considered to be internal to the parliament. In this view the problem is typically represented to be a result of a persistent and unsolvable conflict between the political parties, a firm unwillingness to compromise or a personal antagonism between the MPs. As we have seen, the first way to explain the limited representative capacity of the Sámi Parliament is marginal within the media discourse. It is the internal explanation that dominates, and it is important to point out that the order of discourse remains more or less unchanged during the period of our study. National and local news coverage through the monitored period is deeply characterized by such reports.

These different ways to explain the problems have, however, further implications, as they—implicitly or explicitly—define who to blame and, by default, indicate how the identified problems are to be solved. If, for instance, the problem is considered to be external, the blame for the defects of the parliament is basically to be put on the Swedish state and it is primarily the design of the parliament that ought to be in focus of the discussion and, in a wider perspective, Swedish Sámi policy at large. But if the problem is considered to be internal, the blame is to be put on the Sámi themselves. In this perspective, the discussions tend to focus on the political parties and the individual MPs as elected representatives rather than the institutional prerequisites for their actual work.

The Sámi Parliament as an administrative authority

The second way in which the Swedish Sámi Parliament is represented as a problem has to do with its function as an administrative authority, where the general opinion is that its administrative performance is weak. There are several ways to explain this poor performance within the media discourse. The first describes the parliament as a whole as characterized by chaos and disorder. This approach, in which the parliament’s ability to function in a normal way is put into question, is frequently encountered in the media coverage and was a recurrent theme during the period of our study. In such news reports the depiction of the Sámi Parliament as chaotic and disordered is often closely related to the portrayal of the political instability of the parliament. This has especially been the case during the last few years. Following the 2009 elections, the coverage of the political turbulence is often accompanied by observations of how this affected the administrative efficiency of the parliament. As reported, for instance, by *Västerbottens-Kuriren*: “The division in the Board of the Sámi Parliament is more profound than ever, and this brawl may now result in a paralysed exercise of public authority” (VK, 110506). Similarly, *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* wrote that: “The handling in the Board of the Sámi Parliament has got completely wrecked. [...] The disputes in the Sámi Parliament have caused the work of the administrative authority to cease almost completely” (NSD, 110507).²⁷

This way of explaining the problem is thus quite similar to the way in which the representative capacity of the parliament is framed as a problem of political stability, something which is hardly surprising, given the dual function of the Sámi Parliament. Indeed, in the media representation of the parliament as a problem it was often unclear whether the reports were intended at its function as an

²⁶ See VK, 111220. See also NSD, 110524; N, 110901.

²⁷ See also NK, 110406, 110421, 110506; N, 110219, 110506, 110901; NSD, 110202, 110326, 110420, 110524, 110527; VF, 110507, 110510, 110526; VK, 110202, 110219, 110325, 110413, 110622. Similar reports were published in 2010. See for example NK, 100224; N, 100526; NSD, 100223, 100224, 100527, 100924; VK, 100225.

administrative authority or its role as a popularly elected parliament. This was most clearly the case in the early press coverage of the parliament. A few months after the general elections in May 1993 *Västerbottens-Kuriren* described the activities during the first session of the Sámi Parliament in these terms: "Already when the agenda was about to be affirmed there was a general confusion [...] How could the parliament function if the division paraded at the nominations continues?" (VK, 930828). Prior to the 1997 election the Skellefteå based newspaper *Norra Västerbotten* referred to a Sámi MP who compared the proceedings of the parliament to a cancer: "We have failed in designing the Sámi Parliament and its working regulations" (NV, 970513).²⁸ A few years later, another MP was interviewed in the Luleå daily *Norrbottens-Kuriren*, and to the question whether "the Sámi Parliament had found its work model and routines" he answered: "No, it is more turbulent than ever as a result of our re-organisation and we have a temporarily appointed Chief Secretary. We have never experienced more disorder. The Board can not keep the budget [...]" (NK, 050509). Although the description of the parliament as characterized by chaos and disorder was a recurrent theme during the entire period of our study, it was particularly characteristic of the media coverage surrounding the two elections in 2001. Prior to the first election that year, it was, for instance, stated in the tabloid *Expressen* that: "Following four chaotic years characterised by endless procedural issues, defections, and mugwumps that have barred all decisions, it is election to the Sámi Parliament on Sunday. [...] The last length of office can be summarised in one word. Chaos" (E, 010518).²⁹

The second way of explaining the Sámi Parliament's administrative performance within the media discourse is to characterise it as weak due to its bureaucratic inexperience or managerial incompetence. While not as frequently mentioned as the issue discussed here above, the view of the administrative apparatus as unprofessional and unskilled is well established in the news reports that we have analyzed. Above all, a large amount of such reports was published in connection with the second election to the Sámi Parliament in November 2001. As noted in an editorial of *Västerbottens-Kuriren*, with reference to the decision to declare the May election invalid: "It is regrettable that the election officials were not sufficiently trained and it was definitely a mistake by the election committee to count invalid votes" (VK, 010713). According to the same newspaper: "Despite the review the election committee is still in office, but they have now participated in a course to manage the requirements better" (VK, 011102). Or, as a Sámi MP summarized her opinion in *Dagens Nyheter*: "It is a pity that we can not go through with an election" (DN, 010712).³⁰

The representation of the administration as incompetent was a common theme in newspapers from 2010 and 2011 as well. In a recent report in *Norrbottens-Kuriren*, for instance, suspicion was cast upon the impartiality of the President: "The President of the Sámi Parliament [...] used an incorrect and a preliminary record to get rid of the Chief Secretary" (VK, 110331). According to a letter published in Skellefteå daily *Norran*, moreover, the members of the Board of the Sámi Parliament are not qualified for the task to "make decisions of importance for all of Sápmi. [...] How is it possible that the representatives of the Sámi Parliament behave like sulky and obstinate children in pre-school?" (N, 111119).³¹

The third explanation within media is closely related to the first two insofar as the representation of the parliament's administrative performance as a problem is expressed in terms of its incompetence or

²⁸ For other reports which described the Sámi Parliament as characterized by chaos and which were published this year, see DN, 970326; 970518; NSD, 970531; VK, 971112, 971118.

²⁹ A large number of similar reports were published this same year. See for example DN, 010131, 010206, 010412, 011104; SVD, 011102; VK, 010219, 010222, 010227, 010412, 010530, 010606, 010901, 011023, 011215; ÖP, 010531, 011129.

³⁰ See also DN, 010725, 010914, 011101, 011105; SVD, 010712, 011101; VK, 010403, 010530, 010712a, 010712b, 010914; ÖP, 010727, 011105. Compare the reporting about the "lost" votes after the 1997 election. For instance NK, 970527; TT, 970527; NK, 970530.

³¹ See also NSD, 110502; VK, 110219, 110325. See also the following articles from 2010: NK, 100118; NSD, 100119. The denigrating images that often accompanied the appearance of Sámi officials and parliamentarians in the press were frequently augmented by reader comments appearing below the article in the on-line version of the paper.

bad organization. In articles which adhere to the third version of this discourse though, the assumptions regarding the weak performance of the parliament is reinforced by making reference to external authorities such as the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO). The reason for treating such media coverage as a separate category in this study has to do with a sudden increase in the number of articles which represent the parliament as a problem in such a way. Following the legislative change in 2007 to transfer part of the responsibility for the reindeer husbandry to the Sámi Parliament and thus to make the parliament a central administrative agency under the Ministry for Rural Affairs, criticism against the management of issues such as the compensation for damages caused by wild animals and land conflicts has resulted in a growing number of complaints regarding the administrative performance of the parliament. In 2010 and 2011, when most of the media coverage was focused on the issue of the political instability of the Sámi Parliament, a considerable amount of articles was published in which the administrative performance was represented as a problem in such a way. As it, for example, was reported by *Norrbottens-Kuriren*: “A private individual has reported the Sámi Parliament to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, JO, after waiting 14 months before his appeal of a decision was redirected to the court” (NK, 110603). Similarly, according to *Norrländska Socialdemokraten*: “The Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO) criticises the Sámi Parliament in four cases for slow handling or negligence of managing cases” (NSD, 111107).³²

In *Norrländska Socialdemokraten*, *Norrbottens-Kuriren* and *Västerbottens-Kuriren*, the three papers with the largest coverage of the Sámi Parliament during this period, the presence of such problem representations is quite clear. The amount of such reports published prior to this period was negligible. For *Norrländska Socialdemokraten* the share of the total number of reports which described the Sámi Parliament as a problem in this way were 17 percent in 2009, 5 in 2010 and 13 in 2011. The figures for *Norrbottens-Kuriren* were 20, 25 and 29 percent respectively while for *Västerbottens-Kuriren* the figures were 53, 66 and 26 percent.

In our view, these three explanations of the weak administrative performance of the Sámi Parliament should be understood as different expressions of the same dominant discourse. According to our analysis of the news, the vast majority of the articles tend to frame the problem in terms of a lack of professional competence or a general disorder in the main functions of government. However, as was the case with the issue of the parliament’s function as a representative body, there exists a marginal alternative explanation emphasising that the weak administrative performance is to be understood as a consequence of the institutional design of the parliament. This counter discourse could, for instance, be illustrated by an article published in the Skellefteå-based newspaper *Norra Västerbotten* in 1997, quoting a Sámi MP arguing that: “This clash of interests between being an administrative authority and at the same time popularly elected to represent the Sámi is the origin of conflicts. [...] Sometimes the state is our partner and sometimes our adversary” (NV, 970515). A few years later, the Luleå daily newspaper *Norrbottens-Kuriren* wrote that the “complaints about the disorder in the parliament and that it does not work” is unfair to the Sámi Parliament as many “parliaments have not found their structure in ten, twenty years” (NK, 050508). This way of framing the problem is, however, almost completely absent in the news coverage as a whole. During the course of the 1997 election for example, only about 5% of the articles (4 of the 78 articles in the *SPA* from that period) can be categorized as examples of such a discourse.³³ Indeed, most articles which describe the administrative capacity as a problem do not indicate any institutional explanation at all.

As in the case of the depiction of the representative capacity of the Sámi Parliament we have to make a distinction between two general assumptions regarding the causes of this problem. Within the terms of the dominant discourse, the weak performance is assumed to result from individual incompetence of the members of parliament or the functionaries, immature behaviour or a not fully developed organisation and—as we have seen in the media coverage of the political instability—a further

³² See also NK, 110128, 110329, 110715, 111107; N, 111107; NSD, 110129; VF, 110428, 110716; VK, 110312, 110323, 110429, 110603, 111110; ÖP, 110318.

³³ In addition we have gathered data from three newspapers for the entire year of 1997. Of the 60 articles inspected only 1 represented the Sámi Parliament as a problem in such a way.

explanation could be strong and deeply engrained internal divisions between the subgroups of the Sámi population. The weak performance is thus explained by internal flaws. The alternative explanation to this problem is once again explained in terms of the institutional design of the parliament, i.e. external factors. The conclusion is thus similar to the analysis of the other problematic topic within the media discourse: if the problem is formulated as an internal problem, the Sámi officials are the ones to blame for the defects of the parliament.

And once again it is important to note that the order of discourse remains more or less unchanged during the period of our study, although the weakness of the parliament's administrative performance appears to be increasingly emphasised as the parliament gets more administrative tasks to handle.

The media discourse and its consequences for the political representation of the Sámi

If we return to our research questions it appears as if the recognition of the Sámi as an indigenous people is widely accepted in the news representations of the Sámi Parliament, and the parliament in itself and the Sámi right to self-determination are not explicitly challenged. In the media discourse, however, a consensus can be found on the limited capacity of the Sámi Parliament to function as a representative body of the Sámi people and on its weak administrative performance, which—if true—must be considered to be serious problems. In this article our ambition is not to discuss or evaluate the accuracy of the dominant conception of the Sámi Parliament as malfunctioning; rather, our aim is to analyse further the consequences of the dominant explanations to this problem within the media discourse as it is put forward in terms of persistent and unsolvable conflicts between the political parties, a firm unwillingness to compromise or personal antagonism between the MPs (its political instability), or individual incompetence of the members of parliament or the functionaries, immature behaviour or a not fully developed organisation (its weak administrative performance).

Our starting-point here is how this way of formulating the problem puts the blame mainly on the Sámi themselves, and not on the institutional design of the parliament, i.e. on the relation between the Sámi people and the Swedish state. On the one hand, this massive critique formulated in the media discourse could be seen as legitimate and a fulfilment of one of the major tasks of the media: to critically scrutinise political and administrative power. From this point of view a malfunctioning Sámi Parliament ought rightfully to be criticised, just like any other publicly elected body in Sweden (or elsewhere), and the elected MPs have to take their responsibility. Moreover, our analysis of the media discourse on the Sámi Parliament only gives some support to the reports from the Swedish Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, which show that the Sámi in Sweden often perceive the picture conveyed by the press as degrading: “The Sámi complain that it is quite legitimate to joke about the Sámi on the basis of racist and prejudiced conceptions. Descriptions of the Sámi are also based on such conceptions and the Sámi are often depicted as an exotic, frock-wearing people or as being a reactionary group dependent on social welfare” (DO 2008, p. 33). Although the discourse is characterised by a stereotypical understanding of the Sámi, in terms of personal antagonism, democratic immaturity, incompetence or immature behaviour, there are no overtly racist conceptions to be found in the news representations, and no explicit exoticism.³⁴ A derogatory use of language is, however, present in the news representations, as Sámi politicians and political debates are described by using words such as “sandpit”, “throwing pies”, or “pre-school children”, but such descriptions are probably just as common in news coverage of the Swedish Riksdag and the local parliaments.

Furthermore, the media discourse might be interpreted as mainly, or at least partly, reflecting an internal Sámi debate, not the attitudes of the dominant Swedish society, as the articles often refer to or quote Sámi MPs and civil servants. However, the internal Sámi debate is much more complex than what is usually represented in the media, something that is evident in a letter by Sara Larsson, a member of the Sámi Parliament and former President, published in *Västerbottens-Kuriren*. In the letter she identifies three reasons in order to explain the persistence of difficulties related to the parliament's

³⁴ Reports from Finland demonstrate similar experiences of the news coverage as “biased” and based on “[s]tereotypical representations of the Sami”, but in Finland the news reports are also shown to be explicitly “anti-Sami in character” (Pietikäinen 2003, p. 587), something that is not present in the Swedish media discourse. It is worth noticing here that our analysis is limited to the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament and in news representation on other issues the descriptions may differ considerably.

dual functions: “The first is the division between reindeer herding and non-reindeer herding Sámi. The second is the construction of the Sámi Parliament as both a representative body and an administrative authority. The third and decisive reason is the lack of leadership” (VK, 110521).³⁵ Earlier research also confirms that the Sámi MPs are worried about how the parliament works in both its roles, but a fundamental problem according to them is the unsolved question of how the Sámi right to self-determination ought to be interpreted and what it would mean in the day-to-day life of the Sámi Parliament (Lawrence & Mörkenstam 2012, pp. 43-45, 48-50).

On the other hand, this one-sided news representation is problematic, and has consequences for the political representation of the Sámi, especially in a context where the right to self-determination—what it means and ought to mean—is negotiated and re-negotiated in political practice. Firstly, this massive critical stance towards the Sámi Parliament in the media discourse, in which the blame is put on the Sámi MPs themselves, could contribute to the lack of trust in the parliament and thus undermine its political legitimacy within the Sámi community. Although the Sámi MPs and civil servants are partly responsible for the political instability of the parliament and its weak performance, something that they are well aware of, they also emphasise the parliament’s dual roles and limited mandate as undermining the trust in the parliament, as both factors delimit the right to self-determination drastically. And this perspective is something that is completely ignored in the media discourse. Moreover, this lack of trust was also something that in itself was considered to be news and as such recurrently made by reference to various polls. In 2011, for instance, *Västerbottens Folkblad* stated that: “Following the turbulence lately in the Sámi Parliament the voters seem to have lost their trust in the activity. Half of the Sámi voters report that they have a low or very low trust in the political work of the Sámi Parliament during this length of office” (VF, 110524).³⁶

In this context it is worth noticing that there are almost no explanations of the perceived political instability of the Sámi Parliament by comparing the parliamentary situation to other popularly elected parliaments. The political instability following the 2009 election could, for instance, easily be interpreted as a common problem to all parliaments or assemblies facing an unstable majority. In such a context, the political turbulence could be explained as part of democracy and especially of democratic electoral systems based on proportional representation without an election threshold (see, e.g., Lijphart 2008). Furthermore, political cleavages have been an important part of election studies for a long time, where particular conflicts are understood in a larger societal context and as a natural part of politics (see, e.g.; Lipset & Rokkan 1967). This larger context was, however, marginal in the news representations, although decisive in order to understand the every-day work of the Sámi Parliament. Some cleavages concern the relation to the Swedish state and the contemporary legislation (like the right to self-determination, land rights and fishing and hunting rights) and others are internal to the Sámi community (like geography, or livelihood) (Bergh & Saglie 2011; Lawrence & Mörkenstam 2012).

Secondly, with a popularly elected Sámi Parliament, the media has a more important role as access to information is decisive in order for the constituents to be able to practice their democratic rights (Dahl 1989). There must be some kind of public sphere where a debate between different options can take place. Voters need information about the parliament and the political parties to make informed choices, and in national elections the contact between constituents and politicians comes mainly through the media (Asp 1986; Norris 2000). According to the standard account of the relation between the media and the public sphere, the public sphere is dependent on the free press in order to fulfil its function to discover and draw attention to important social problems. Depending on whether this relation is approached from a normative or a descriptive point of view, it can be understood either as a condition for enlightenment and liberation or as a source of oppression. According to Jürgen Habermas (1996, p. 359), the public sphere must “not only detect and identify problems but also convincingly and influentially thematize them, furnish them with possible solutions, and dramatize them in such a way that they are taken up and dealt with by parliamentary complexes”. According to

³⁵ See also, VK, 110521; NSD, 110114, 110525; NSD, 100625; VK, 100217.

³⁶ The same poll was referred to in NSD, 110524 and N, 110526.

our analysis, the Sámi public sphere in Sweden seems not only to be limited to a few topics (however important these topics may be) and characterised by negative reporting; different interpretations of events and further background information were seldom to be found in the news representation.³⁷ Thus, important political problems on the political agenda of the Sámi Parliament—like the right to self-determination, language rights or the right to land and water—were rarely mentioned and the role of the dominant Swedish society was consistently ignored.³⁸

This way of making the topical political questions invisible could, thirdly, be interpreted as a way to de-politicise Sámi issues. De-politicisation means that some questions are made non-negotiable or unproblematic. Problems and conflicts are formulated in personal and individual terms rather than as matters of collective concern, i.e. as political (Wendt 2012, pp.17-18). In the news representation of the Sámi this de-politicisation is made in two different ways (besides the already mentioned neglect of topical issues of concern to the Sámi people): the focus of the articles is often on internal and personal conflicts among the Sámi, while neglecting the major conflict between the Sámi people and the Swedish State; and the different political ideals among the Sámi and the political parties are not considered to be a sign of a healthy democracy, what is explicitly required from the Sámi is unity on all issues. The media discourse thus provides a very limited field of possible political options—to use the language of Foucault—and thus contributes to set narrow normative limits for the legitimate action of the Sámi MPs and the parliament.

Fourthly, the media discourse evolves around only a few topics constructing stereotypical images of the Sámi Parliament and these news representations are hard to distinguish from the Sámi themselves: they are politically and administratively incompetent, democratically immature and inclined to political and personal strife. These stereotypes are in a historical perspective easily understood as a continuation of the dominant conception of the Sámi people describing the Sámi as immature and uncivilised (see, e.g., Cramér 1982; Lundmark 2002; Upman 1978). In the early 1900s, for instance, the conception of the Sámi as being nomads—dominant in the public discourse of the time (Mörkenstam 1999)—equalled being “uncivilised”, which implied that the Sámi were incapable of handling their own affairs. This could be illustrated by the parliamentary debate in 1917 on the right of the Sámi to combine reindeer herding and farming (something that required the Sámi to reside in permanent houses). In the debate the Secretary of State posed the question if the “Lapps [really are capable] of realising the consequences of such a system? In opposition to their own opinion [in favour of a combination] one could present the results, arrived at by experienced men with the mandate of the government to investigate the issue and whose competence and impartiality are beyond doubts” (Riksdagens debatt (FK), No. 51 1917, p. 9).³⁹

This way of framing the problem within discourse made it easy to reject demands for political rights for the Sámi in capacity of being a national minority. Instead, the dominant conception of Sámihood at the time justified a paternalistic and “protective” policy, institutionalised in detail in legislation (Lantto 2012). In the case of colonizing states Anaya (1996, p. 23-24) has described this kind of state policy as a “trusteeship doctrine”. In its emphasis on the democratic immaturity of the Sámi parliament—the incapacity of the Sámi themselves—the contemporary media discourse is in many ways a continuation of this traditional system of belief even though Sámi rights are recognised and the Sámi have their own representative body. Consequently, there are no proposals for an increased autonomy to be seen in the media coverage of the Sámi Parliament, neither politically nor administratively. And this could be devastating to the Sámi when the right to self-determination in practice is negotiated and under development.

³⁷ A similar pattern appears to be prevailing in the news discourse in Finland (Pietikäinen 2003), while the election study of the 2009 election to the Sámi Parliament in Norway unequivocally shows that there exists a Sámi public sphere exclusively for Sámi politics and political debate in Norway (Josefsen & Skogerbo 2011).

³⁸ Our analysis does not exclude that these kind of political problems were discussed in other articles, as we have only analysed articles on the Sámi Parliament. However, even if we could find articles on these highly topical issues, it would be interesting that they are not discussed as important issues to the representative body of the Sámi people.

³⁹ Riksdagens debatt (FK) stands for Parliamentary Debate, First Chamber.

3.4. Concluding remarks

In the introduction we characterised the situation and status of the Sámi people as highly acknowledged and recognized, and in terms of the ACCEPT framework they can be seen to fulfil, or even transcend, the third and most advanced class of tolerance on a constitutional level. This class includes “recognition, respect as equal and admission as normal” and in line with this category a mere focus on toleration is not enough, but instead more thorough reforms of institutions and citizenship are seen to be needed to challenge historical injustices, and to secure the right of the Sámi people (Modood & Dobbernack 2011, p. 32). Discussions on these kinds of reforms are not frequent in the media discourse in Sweden. On the contrary, our analysis shows that the media discourse has both direct and indirect consequences for the political representation of the Sámi, delimiting their recognised right to self-determination. Directly, it affects the construction of a Sámi public sphere, indispensable for the parliament to function in its role as a representative body. The news reporting is limited in scope as it, as we have seen, privileges reporting on internal conflicts and individual behaviour and tend to neglect or ignore fundamental political problems of the Sámi people, thus it contributes to a de-politicisation of Sámi politics. Furthermore, it contributes to a conception of the parliament as problematic and dysfunctional, thereby undermining the potential level of trust of its constituency. Indirectly, the emphasis on the democratic and administrative immaturity of the Sámi parliament reproduces stereotypical images of the Sámi as unable to handle their own affairs, thus framing the problem in a specific way. And if we believe that the way a problem is framed affects the way that this issue is dealt with politically, then the range of possible political options is seriously limited by the way the Sámi Parliament is conceptualised in media discourse. If it is the Sámi Parliament (and the Sámi politicians) in itself that is the problem, and not the Swedish Sámi policy or the relation between the dominant majority society and the Sámi minority, political proposals trying to increase Sámi self-determination in accordance with the UN Declaration will, for instance, easily be rejected within discourse. Thus, could the media discourse in Sweden be characterised as intolerant, and thereby challenging the institutional accommodation of the Sámi people?

In order to answer this question, we believe that our conclusions correspond to what has often been said about the ambivalence of the contemporary practices of toleration, i.e. that toleration can be based on disrespect and domination as well as on recognition and respect. Therefore, we should in accordance with Forst (2004) distinguish between two conceptions of toleration: a permission conception and a respect conception. “According to the first [permission] conception [...] toleration is a relation between an authority or a majority and a dissenting, ‘different’ minority. Toleration then means that the authority (or majority) gives qualified permission to the members of the minority to live according to their beliefs on the condition that the minority accepts the dominant position of the authority (or majority)” (Forst 2004, p. 315). The second (respect) conception of toleration “is one in which the tolerating parties recognize one another in a reciprocal sense [...] they respect each other as moral-political equals in the sense that their common framework of social life should [...] be guided by norms that all parties can equally accept and that do not favour any one specific ‘ethical community,’ so to speak” (Forst 2004, p. 316).

Our analysis clearly shows that the recognition of the Sámi people on an institutional level—the right to self-determination as institutionalised in and through the Sámi Parliament—is hampered by the way the media represents the Sámi Parliament. The practice of toleration in the media discourse seems to reach a limit when the Sámi claim equal public and political status in capacity of being an indigenous people. By neglecting the relation between the Sámi people and the dominant Swedish society in news representations, i.e. the right to self-determination, it is obvious that the Swedish State still is considered to be the sole legitimate authority with exclusive “discretion over the values that justify and limit toleration” (Forst 2004, p. 316). Thus, the media discourse could be seen to give voice to a permission conception of toleration. Furthermore, unlike the view that the limits of toleration should be determined at the discretion of the dominant majority or authority, the respect conception has to rely on the ability of the members of the civil society to perform this task. In other words, a respect conception of toleration makes tolerance “a demanding *moral and political virtue*” (Forst 2007, p.

232). Our analysis casts doubts on how the one-sided news representation could contribute to a respect conception of toleration, as respect “can hardly grow on a cultural soil which only nourishes the values and conceptions of the good of a part of the citizenry” (Forst 2004, p. 320).

The media discourse in Sweden can thus not be characterised as widely intolerant, however, the practice of toleration as it is expressed in the news representations is based on domination and disrespect, not on recognition and respect. In that way, the media discourse could be characterised in terms of a limited or very limited tolerance.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUDING REMARKS

From a European perspective – and more specifically – from an EU-perspective, ethnic and religious immigrant groups, and their members, have often been at the focus of the debate on tolerance and recognition. Questions of discrimination have also arisen with specific reference to these groups' experiences. In this report we have highlighted the experiences concerning Swedish Muslims in the field of education – both in terms of the practice of veiling and the establishment of faith-schools.

In chapter 2 of this comprehensive report we have tried to uncover the discourse around these issues on the basis of interviews with 22 persons (students at teacher's programmes, teachers, headmasters and union representatives, civil servants, imams and one representative of a political party in the present government). In other words, these are people who are "stakeholders" concerning the crucial questions.

With reference to the project's salient concepts – toleration – non-toleration and recognition – the underlying values and norms in these debates have been exposed and analyzed in this chapter, and reveal that concepts such as "educational equality" are prominent in these kind of debates (in comparison to concepts such as gender equity in other national debates). Hence, the main objective for several of these persons in the educational sphere has been to fulfil the objective of educational justice in terms of "educational equivalence", a concept which reveals an egalitarian tradition in the field of education.

The results above harmonize with a common theme in Swedish public life – the tendency toward "equal" uniform solutions – especially in the field of education. More private and independent forms of education have not fitted in very well in the educational and political traditions of Sweden during most of the 20th century. For the Social democrats, who had governmental power through several decades, the idea of a centralized public education has been crucial. This has involved criticism towards more private and independent forms of educations. The secularized development of the Swedish society during the 20th century has also meant that rights which emphasize the importance of religious norms and practices in public life (such as education) has created obstacles for religious minorities to voice their religious demands. The law of religious liberty from 1951 also assumed a concept of religion and church which neglected the aspects of religious life in other traditions than the protestant churches.

However, it needs to be stressed that there are (in addition to the groups mentioned above such as Muslim immigrants and ethnic immigrant minorities) other groups such as national minorities and indigenous population, whose problems of discriminations and intolerance need to be addressed within the EU-context. These latter groups share in several cases similar problems of actual discrimination, marginalization and intolerance with religious and ethnic immigrant minorities in daily life. In addition, national minorities and indigenous people have faced a historical discrimination that reveals itself in more current forms of discrimination and intolerance. In the Swedish case, the indigenous population of the Sámi has experienced a discriminatory policy of segregation during several decades of the 20th century and has struggled to gain political influence in Swedish society.

One important objective for a group such as the Sámi population has been the fulfilment of historical rectification. Further, the Sámi population has often been involved in legal processes concerning land and water rights and self-determination. From a global and European perspective, indigenous populations are relatively small. The implications of their political claims are on the other hand important. They touch upon essential topics in national and international politics such as territorial integrity, land rights, political and cultural self-determination and citizenship rights. How various states and majority populations respond to the political claims of indigenous people could also be seen as a litmus test of the overall inclination to engage in anti-discrimination projects and struggles against intolerance, not least from the perspective of a history of colonization.

In ACCEPT PLURALISM, Sweden is the only country with an indigenous population. This justifies the inclusion of the Sámi people and their claims of political self-determination and recognition in

chapter 3 of this comprehensive report. Through “the prism” of the media coverage of the Swedish Sámi parliament and its activities during almost two decades, attitudes of tolerance, recognition and non-tolerance have been investigated. Sámi people fulfil the most common criteria of being indigenous such as first nation status. The salience of traditional livelihoods such as reindeer herding and the specific importance of territory (not least from a cultural identity perspective) also singles out the Sámi population from other groups in Sweden. At the same time – as was mentioned before – members of the Sámi group have faced harassments, stereotypical images, intolerance and discriminatory treatments in a similar vein as other groups such as ethnic/religious immigrants and national minorities.

In chapter 3 the specific attempt to establish a new form of political representation for the Sámi population has been in focus. Never before has any full blown media study been done covering how the work of the Sámi parliament has been described and evaluated in the Swedish media at both national and local level. In other words, this study is unique in several ways:

- 1) Empirically it covers the whole period of the Sámi parliament since its establishment in 1993 until now (with a specific emphasis from 2009 onwards);
- 2) In an explicit manner the study connects the development of international law (concerning indigenous populations) with the media representation in Sweden, i.e., the question of self-determination and cultural autonomy;
- 3) The study contributes to the theoretical debate on recognition through making an explicit distinction between “institutional/formal recognition” and recognition in a wider sense “practical – day to day recognition”;
- 4) It highlights the obvious and hierarchical power relation between the Sámi people and the Swedish majority society. The idea that the Sámi people should have a right to self determination seems to be severely criticized in the media on the basis of the descriptions and the evaluations of the work of the Sámi parliament;
- 5) The study suggests that the Sámi parliament – as a part of the Swedish political system – is not really included in the public sphere in a way that sends a signal that the voters have a “Sámi public sphere” of weight which creates incentives for the voters to make informed and serious choices;
- 6) The study has also clear policy implications in the sense that the current construction of the Sámi parliament as both an administrative (with close connection to the Swedish government) and as a representative agency is seen as problematic, as the former characteristic often is seen as pivotal.

This latter feature of the Sámi parliament also fits in well with the so-called *corporatism* tradition of Swedish political life where the government has developed a close association with all interest groups in the Swedish society.

In summary, both case-studies – on the educational and the political fields- suggest that there is a discrepancy between formal recognition and “everyday practice” concerning multiculturalism in Swedish society. Even though multiculturalism (or freedom of choice concerning culture) is emphasized in the constitution (“regeringsformen”) and through the ratification of various regional and international conventions, there is a clear distance with everyday practices and sentiments in public debates. Although the legislation allows for Muslim independent schools as well as veiling practices in public schools, there exists a certain opposition against particular expressions of Muslim faith reflected in the interviews of the study and in the public debate. Apart from references to human rights expressed through documents such as the UN Child Convention (1989), salient references in the discourse are also made to the objective to fulfil prevailing quality norms in education that are seen as more or less cross cultural or universal. Among those are the educational level of the teachers, the quality of school environment (the faith school issue) and the possibilities of communication in various educational settings (the veil issue).

The same kind of phenomenon also applies to the debates on the Sámi parliament in local and national media. In spite of the formal recognition of Sámi independence, the attitudes in public life reflect a sceptical attitude towards the main political expression of that independence, i.e. the Sámi parliament. The main argumentations or statements in the media debates do not explicitly express any full blown rejections of the idea of Sámi self-determination to any large extent and its current manifestation through the Sámi parliament (it is also a principle endorsed at an official level).

The pivotal criticism in the media concerns instead the lack of “quality” in the sense of an assumed instability and a deficient administrative capacity. Between the lines one could maybe trace a thought about “political immaturity”. In other words, there is also a discrepancy between the institutional recognition of Sámi political independence and autonomy and everyday practice (in the same vein as in the educational sphere concerning formal acceptance of diversity in schools and day-to-day practice). In both cases, the critical parties also use references to assumed universal or “cross cultural quality” standards instead of normative principles that express explicit rejection of multiculturalism or cultural rights.

The studies implied some normative conclusions for legislation and policy makers. In the field of education it was seen as important to secure and strengthen the work against discrimination of several forms in terms of efficient legislation. Policy makers are also obliged to create awareness, through local and national educational policy, about the proliferation of anti-religious and anti-Muslim beliefs, in teachers’ education as well as in teaching practice. Further, one should make sure that teachings on religion are devoid of racist and/or secular prejudices (this applies particularly to the teaching on Islam). The organization of schooling should facilitate for discussions and exchange of opinions between secular and religious students and teachers.

In the case of the political influence of the Sámi people and the media coverage of important “Sámi” issues, policy makers should take action to reformulate Swedish Sámi policy in accordance with the recognized Sámi right to self-determination. This could mean a strengthening of the Sámi Parliament’s representative function, and a clarification of the administrative and representative roles of the Parliament. It could also mean to address discrimination in accordance with already endorsed declarations and conventions such as the UN declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and the European framework conventions concerning minority languages and national minorities (2000), and further, financial support for newspapers in the Sámi languages. The local and national media ought to act for the construction of a Sámi public sphere. This could, for instance, be done by a wider and deeper coverage of Sámi political life in general and avoid the reproduction of historical stereotypical images of the Sámi people.

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